## SPECIAL DOUBLE XMAS WEEK NUMBER.

THE
**BEST**
Strengthening
Winter Drink
**BOVRIL**
THE
**BEST**
FOR MAKING
SOUPS,
GRAVIES, &c.

# PEARSON'S WEEKLY.

TO INTEREST,
TO ELEVATE, TO AMUSE.

**UNEQUALLED**
FOR MAKING
*Soups, Stews, Hashes, Gravies, &c.*
2 PRIZE MEDALS, CHICAGO, 1893.
**EDWARD'S DESICCATED SOUPS.**
COOKERY BOOK POST FREE ON APPLICATION.
Sole Manufacturers—
F. KING & CO., Ltd.,
3 to 6, Camomile St.,
London, E.C.

No. 232.] TRANSMISSION AT BOOK RATES. WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 29, 1894. ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL. [PRICE TWOPENCE.

Mild in operation and free from injurious drugs.

**NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS**

SPLENDID TONIC. TRADE NORTON'S MARK. GENTLE APERIENT.

100 Years' Reputation AS BEING AN *UNEQUALLED REMEDY* FOR INDIGESTION SICK-HEADACHE BILIOUSNESS DEBILITY STOMACH AND LIVER COMPLAINTS.

**Bottles, 1/1½, 2/9, & 11/- each. By all Medical Vendors throughout the World.**
*Ask for "Norton's Camomile Pills," and do not be persuaded to purchase an Imitation.*
Prepared by NORTON'S, LIMITED, 21, SPITAL SQUARE, LONDON, E.

**BEETHAM'S Glycerine & Cucumber**

PRESERVES the SKIN from the effects of FROST, COLD WINDS, HARD WATER, and INFERIOR SOAPS. Entirely removes and prevents all

**ROUGHNESS, REDNESS, CHAPS, IRRITATION, &c.**
**KEEPS THE SKIN SOFT AND BLOOMING**
**IN ALL WEATHERS.**

Refuse all Imitations, many of which are poisonous. Be sure to ask for "BEETHAM'S," the ONLY GENUINE. Bottles, 1s. and 2s. 6d., of all Chemists and Perfumers. Either size sent post free for 3d. extra, direct by the Sole Makers, M. BEETHAM & SON, Chemists, Cheltenham.

**ROBINSON & CLEAVER'S**
**IRISH DAMASK TABLE & HOUSE LINEN**
**IS THE FINEST IN THE WORLD.**

Being Woven by Hand it wears longer, and retains its rich satin appearance to the last. By obtaining it direct all intermediate profits are saved, and it costs no more than is usually charged for common power-loom goods.

**IRISH CAMBRIC HANDKERCHIEFS.**
Ladies' Bordered, 2/3; Gents', 3/3 doz.; Ladies' Hemstitched, 2/9; Gents', 3/11 doz.
**ROBINSON AND CLEAVER, BELFAST.**
Irish Linen Cambric Handkerchief and Damask Manufacturers and Furnishers to Her Majesty the Queen, the Empress Frederick of Germany, H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught, &c., &c.
Full detailed illustrated Price List and samples sent post free.

***First Grand "Pioneer" Reduction Sale.***

REMARKS.—A lady customer writes complaining that we send out too large a Carpet for the money. Be this so or not, we send out no Carpet measuring less than 6ft. by 9ft. even for 3s. 6d.

**TEST THEM. THEY WILL SURPRISE YOU.**

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE (CHANCERY DIVISION).—HODGSON *v.* WEBB BROTHERS.—On the 18th day of July, 1890, his Lordship, Mr. Justice Chitty, granted an interim injunction restraining Messrs. Webb Brothers, of Hackney Wick, from infringing Mr. Fredk. Hodgson's Trade Mark "Eclipse," No. 93,774 (of Leeds).

**EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS**
*100,000 "ECLIPSE"*
**CARPETS**
(REGISTERED).
**GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.**

SALE PRICE, **3/6** EACH.

*This Gigantic Offer is a Special Contract made with Readers of* PEARSON'S WEEKLY *only.* We will **FORWARD DIRECT** from the **LOOMS** to any **ADDRESS** on **RECEIPT** of **AMOUNT**, a **GENUINE WOVEN, SEAMLESS, REVERSIBLE CARPET**, the **LARGEST EVER SOLD** at the **PRICE**.

SALE PRICE, **3/6** EACH.

Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not Printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost Double above Prices. A Rug sent with Carpet, 1s. extra.

Kilkea Castle, Mageney, co. Kildare, August 17th, 1894.

LADY EVA FITZGERALD writes: "The 'Eclipse' Carpets supplied by Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son—her ladyship is much pleased with them."

**SPECIAL OFFER.**

**TWO CARPETS AND TWO RUGS** - - - - - - **8/-**
or **FOUR CARPETS AND FOUR RUGS** - - - - - - **15/6**

Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly examine and compare these Carpets.

**SATISFACTION GUARANTEED.**
**DO NOT MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY. IT MAY NOT OCCUR AGAIN.**

"PEARSON'S WEEKLY" COUPON, 29/12/94.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. or stamps for amount, we guarantee to send goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

All Orders despatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post. Cheques and P.O.'s payable to—
**F. HODGSON & SON,** Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants, **WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.**

IN BOTTLE AND ON DRAUGHT.

**STONE'S GINGER WINE**

***Sold by Grocers, Wine Merchants, Stores, and Licensed Victuallers everywhere.***

**TEMPERANCE WINES**
CAN BE MADE WITH
**MASON'S**
**Wine Essences**

Most Refreshing at Children's Parties and all Social Gatherings. Non-Alcoholic, Pure, and very Refreshing.

A Lady writes:—"*The 6d. bottle of Ginger Wine Essence made several bottles of most delicious wine, far better than what we have paid 2s. a bottle for. It is most suitable for children's parties.*"

**GINGER, LEMON, ORANGE, RASPBERRY, &c.**

*Try the Ginger and Elderberry. The Wine will be just ready for Christmas.*

ALSO MAKERS OF MASON'S
**EXTRACT OF HERBS.**
**EXTRACT OF HOPS.** For Hop Ale or Bitters.
**EXTRACT SARSAPARILLA.** For Porter.
**EXTRACT GINGER.** For Sparkling Ginger Beer.
**EXTRACT GINGER ALE.** For Ginger Ale.
**MASON'S LEMONINE.** For Lemonade.
**MASON'S CIDERINE.** For Devonshire Cider.
**MASON'S WINTER EXTRACT.** For Winter Ale.

A Teaspoonful of any of the above Extracts will make one gallon.
Bottles, **6d.**, **1s.**, and **2s.** each.
**BEWARE OF VILE IMITATIONS.**
*Send nine stamps for SAMPLE of Wine Essence, naming fruit flavour, or 15 stamps for both Wine Essence and Extract.*

SOLE INVENTORS AND MANUFACTURERS—
**NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.**

All Communications respecting Advertisements should be sent to the Advertisement Department, "PEARSON'S WEEKLY" Offices, HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.

# JOHN NOBLE Ltd., THE WAREHOUSE, 11, PICCADILLY, MANCHESTER.

## KNOCKABOUT FROCKS FOR GIRLS

are supplied in the **John Noble Cheviot Serge,** with saddle top, long full sleeves, and pocket, same colours as the Ladies' 10/6 Costumes.

**FROM 1/6 EACH**

Note the following low prices:

| Lengths | 21 | 24 | 27 | 30 | 33 | ins. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Price | 1/6 | 2/- | 2/6 | 3/- | 3/6 | ea. |

| Lengths | 36 | 39 | 42 | 45 | ins. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Price | 4/- | 4/6 | 5/- | 5/6 | ea. |

POSTAGE 4½d. EXTRA.

**EVERY PURCHASER DELIGHTED.**

The lengths stated are from top of neckband to bottom of skirt in front.

**DON'T BE AFRAID** to order by post: John Noble Ltd. will refund cash if goods be not approved. John Noble Ltd. is an old-established undertakin; with a capital of £80,000 possessing a magnificent Warehouse in the centre of Manchester and a large and well equipped Factory employing upwards of 800 workers, and may safely be relied on to perform all the promises made in this advertisement in every particular.

## NOBLE'S NOVELTIES

In Dress Fabrics for Seasonable Wea
ing hundreds of Novel and Artistic
and Colourings, are unanimously recom
by the leading journals of Fashion
everywhere are invited to write at once

**John Noble's Large Box**

containing over

**1,000 New Patterns**

sent post free on approval to any
A post-card sent to The Wa
will ensure their immediate
The value and variety de

**PATTERNS POST FREE.**

# THE JOHN NOBLE HALF GUINEA COSTUMES

NEW REGISTERED DESIGN

FOR WINTER 1894

John Noble Ltd Regd Design

### DIRECT FROM THE LARGEST FIRM OF COSTUME MANUFACTURERS IN THE WORLD, AT LESS THAN HALF ORDINARY PRICES.

These Costumes are made in **The John Noble Cheviot Serge,** in Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Ruby, Reseda, Tan, Grey or Drab, and are supplied complete for the ridiculous price of **10/6** each, packed in leather board box, and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra. **The John Noble Half-Guinea Costumes** are known all over the world as the most remarkable value ever produced, and have created a complete revolution in the cost of garments for Ladies' wear.

**DON'T MAKE ANY MISTAKE,** JOHN NOBLE'S price (10s. 6d.) is not for the mere dress length but for the complete costume made up and ready for immediate wear.

### OVER 800 WORKERS EMPLOYED IN THEIR MANUFACTURE. THE MOST REMARKABLE VALUE PRODUCED.

☞ JOHN NOBLE, Ltd., the pioneers of the revolution in Dressmaking, caused by the introduction of the famous Half-Guinea Costumes, mean to keep them always in the van, and up to date by following the dictates of fashion, and as the present mode requires much greater fulness in sleeves and skirt they have designed a new and beautiful costume in accordance with this latest style; but particular attention is called to the fact that the price (**10s. 6d.**) remains the same, although the cost of production has been greatly increased by use of extra material

Each garment consists of improved wide skirt and new smartly shaped Bodice, which is pleated at the back into a pointed saddle that terminates in two points at the front; full fashionable sleeves, bound seams, and belt, and the bodice can be worn inside or outside the skirt, which measures 40 inches long. The lower part of the skirt, and the cuffs, collar, and saddle of bodice, are trimmed with one row of fine silk cord, the whole thus forming a Lady's complete costume that has secured beyond a doubt the Admiration of the World.

# ☛ THE ADMIRATION OF THE WORLD ☚

# 10/6

**THE PRESENT DESIGN EXCELS ALL PREVIOUS ONES** in every respect. The style is better, the cut is superior, and the make and finish beyond all criticism, thus adding in a triple degree to the already marvellous value of these Costumes, which have secured **An Enormous Success,** and are known in every part of the civilised world. Each Costume packed in box and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra. The sizes kept in stock will fit any figure up to 38 inches round the bust under arms, but larger or special sizes can be made to order at a cost of 1s. 6d. extra.

☞ **DO NOT HESITATE** to give these Costumes a trial. Post your order to John Noble, Ltd., and you will be delighted with the value received.

**THE TRUTH OF AN ADVERTISEMENT** is not proven by the quantity of orders resulting from its appearance, but by the number of subsequent orders that eventually come to hand from the same persons and it is an incontestible proof of the genuineness of John Noble's advertisements, that the number of repeat orders received daily for these Costumes is fully equalled to that of first orders. Moreover, **LADIES ARE INFORMED** these are not slop-made or "skimpy" looking garments that will break out at the seams and fall to pieces after a few weeks' wear, but full-sized, stylish and thoroughly durable costumes, equally suitable for Morning or General Wear, Gardening, Walking, Climbing, Boating, Tennis, Golf, Travelling, or in fact, they are equally well

### ADAPTED FOR ANY WEAR OR ANY WEARER ANYWHERE.

**THE JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE (Regd.)** Is a fabric of world-wide fame and durability. It is 52 in., wide, does not spot with rain and may be washed whenever necessary. This fabric has never been equalled at the price, and so far as wear and general appearance go, might reasonably be said to be worth anywhere between 2s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. the yard. Colors: Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Reseda, Ruby, Grey, Drab, Tan or Black. Every reader can secure a Full Dress Length of **SIX YARDS FOR 7/6** Sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

Patterns also Illustrated "Book of the Serge" and Fashion Sheet of other Costumes for Ladies' and Children's wear sent Post Free to any reader of PEARSON'S WEEKLY on application to

**JOHN NOBLE, Ltd.**
**11, Piccadilly,**
**MANCHESTER.**

**FROM 5/6**

## LADIES COSTUME SKIRTS

In the Fashionable Wide

[illegible] are supplied in the John Noble Cheviot Serge as follows: Costume Skirts, untrimmed

**PRICE 5/6 ONLY**

Costume Skirts trimmed one row fancy braid [illegible] silk Russia cord, price only [illegible] Costume Skirts, trimmed broad cross-[illegible] bold silk cord, price only [illegible] Costume Skirts, trimmed two rows [illegible] Chenille braid, price only 8s. 11d. Each Skirt packed in box, and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra. Colours: Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze-Green, Ruby, Grey, Tan, or Drab.

**PRICE 8/9 COMPLETE**

## YOUNG MISSES COSTUMES

In a new design that has quite taken the public fancy. They are just th thing for regular wear, being made in the John Nob Cheviot Serge, and consisting of stylish blouse bod and extra wide Skirt. The Bodice is made with prett gathered front, full fashionable sleeves, shaped b and fastens up the back. The Skirt is made in tw sizes, viz., 33 and 36 inches long, and is trimmed t rows of narrow black Russia Braid; the cuffs, coll and belt of bodice being trimmed similarly. Colou Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze-Green, Ruby, or also in fashionable mixtures of drab or grey. Price for the complete Costume only 8s. 9d. Packed in box and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra. When ordering please state whether skirt is required 33 or 36in. long

**8/9**

**HIGHEST DIPLOMA AND GOLD MEDAL** were awarded John Noble, Ltd., for above Costumes, at the British and Colonial Industrial Exhibition, Manchester, October, 1894.

## A WARNING!

Readers are specially cautioned against buying any Costumes represented as the manufacture of John Noble Ltd. from travellers, agents or shops; many very inferior imitations of these world-famed Costumes are just now being offered, produced in inferior matlerials in order to sell them at the same price but as John Noble Ltd. have no agents, no travellers, no branches, or shops, intending purchasers are cautioned that the genuine goods can only be obtained direct from the Originators and Sole Manufacturers (John Noble Ltd.), and all letters should be addressed JOHN NOBLE Ltd., THE WAREHOUSE, MANCHESTER.

**PRESENTS** that are useful are always more acceptable than articles made only to look at, and what can be more acceptable as a Seasonable Gift, to a Lady or Child, than one of The JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE COSTUMES?

# JOHN NOBLE Ltd., THE WAREHOUSE, 11, PICCADILLY, MANCHESTER.

*THE COPYRIGHT OF THE ABOVE ADVERTISEMENT IS PROTECTED.*

Your friend would value "FOOTLIGHT FAVOURITES," No. 2, or the Xmas Issue of "SHORT STORIES," or even this copy, when you've done with it, as much as any Christmas Present.

PEARSON'S WEEKLY.
TO INTEREST, TO ELEVATE, TO AMUSE.

No. 232.] TRANSMISSION AT BOOK RATES. WEEK ENDING DEC. 29, 1894. ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL. [PRICE TWOPENCE.

# *The Editor wishes you all the Compliments of the Season.*

**NOTE BY THE SUB-EDITOR.—The Members of the Staff desire to add their Greetings.**

## HIS CHRISTMAS GIFT.

It seems like a hundred years ago
That we travelled once through the drifted snow
To meet round the Christmas tree.
You were a child with a fair, round face,
And you hung on the tree, with a shy sweet grace,
Your Christmas present for me.

'Twas a scarlet beaded pincushion heart,
Brilliant and shiny—a triumph of art—
With a bead bird on it—a dove.
'Twas bought of a "colleen" (who spoke with a brogue),
And you said in your note—dear little rogue—
That you gave it me with your love.

Well, that little red heart has been with me
Through distant countries far over the sea,
Crossed river, mountain, and lake;
Though never a pin have its tough sides known,
For the heart was as hard as Pharaoh's own,
But I loved it for your sake.

We're very much older and wiser now,
We meet with a formal word and bow,
And many more things we know.
We don't hang our hearts on trees, I believe,
Nor wear them either upon our sleeve;
Is it better, I wonder, so?

The tree is laden with gifts to-night,
And the coloured tapers are gleaming bright,
And the Christ-child floats above.
But my hoped-for gift isn't on the tree;
I want a heart—will you give it me,
As you did before, "with your love?"

◆

## OVER-DOING IT.

A COUNTRY editor who has just arrived in town is introduced to a prominent politician, who, upon shaking hands, says:

"Ah, the editor of the TOOTING TOOTER?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am, indeed, glad to meet you, sir. The TOOTER is one of the best known and most extensively quoted papers in the country. Often, sir, while meditating upon its wise and profound utterances have I felt a strong desire to meet its able editor. Are you in town on business, sir?"

"Yes; you see, I am just about ready to bring out number one of the TOOTER, and have come down to get paper for the first issue."

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## IS THE JEW'S HARP A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT?

THE question has been raised in the United States, for if it be only a toy it will be liable to another rate of import duty. Most people with delicate ears would probably be inclined to negative the idea that any music could be extracted from this implement.

But the authorities are the other way, and Charles Eulenstein, who died only a short time ago at the age of over ninety, was a great performer in his day. Eulenstein, in London, in 1827, gained a great reputation by playing upon sixteen Jew's harps, and he so delighted the then Duke of Gordon that he was induced during the next year to tour in Scotland, where, particularly in the Highlands, the Jew's harp is said to be still very popular.

The name of the instrument is, of course, an absurd corruption of "jaw's harp;" but in Germany, where most of them are manufactured, the instruments are called "buzzing irons."

*All rights reserved.*]

## ANGLING IN THE AIR.

NOTABLE among the denizens of the Balkan Mountains is a bird called by the natives the "wasp-eater." As its name indicates, it is the enemy of the hive and the scourge of honey-bees, but it has a decided preference for wasps.

It pursues its prey with remarkable agility, catching an immense number of insects in its flight through the air in an incredibly short space of time. Strange to say, this bird is caught by means of a line, like a common gudgeon.

The children stick a crooked pin through the body of a live wasp—youth knows no pity—fastening it to a stout piece of thread. The insect soars aloft, and is presently gobbled up by the bird of prey.

It is a humiliating spectacle to see the miserable wasp-eater struggling at the end of the line, like a young carp, while it is being drawn down to earth.

◆

## WHY THE FRENCH CHEERED WELLINGTON.

WHILE Wellington was still a Marquis he went to Paris from Toulouse, where he had fought and won the last battle of the Peninsular War.

He went to the opera the same evening, and though he wore plain clothes and sat in the back of the box, he was almost immediately recognised by some one in the pit, who cried out, "Vellington!"

The name was taken up by others, and at last the entire pit rose, turned to the box, and called, "*Vive Vellington!*"

Nor would the people be satisfied until he had stood up and bowed to them, when he was cheered and applauded again. At the end of the performance the passage from the box was found to be crowded with people. The ladies of the party drew back nervously, but the Duke said, "Come along!" in his brusque way, and conducted them on. While they were still in the corridor a man in the crowd was heard to say to his companions:

"But why are you applauding so much? He has always beaten us!"

This was very true, and the question seemed a natural one; but the answer was charming.

"Yes, but he has always beaten us like a gentleman!"

◆

## A BATTLE ON STILTS.

IN 1748, when Marshal Saxe was travelling through the Low Countries, he came to the town of Namur, in Belgium. Among other things which the citizens did in his honour, they got up a battle on stilts. The town was subject to overflows from the rivers on each side of it, and the people, from much use of stilts at such times, had become very expert with them, and often had stilt-battles on holidays.

The young men formed themselves into opposing armies, with flags and trumpets to make the scene gay.

It was against the rule to use a club or weapon of any sort, or to strike with the fists. Punching with their elbows and kicking with their stilts, to knock their opponents' legs from under them, were the methods of assault employed in these stilt-battles.

It was rough sport, for the combatants fought as if their lives and fortunes depended on the result; and, although no one was ever seriously injured, there were many bruised arms and legs before a battle was decided.

The wives and sisters of the combatants cheered them on, and hastened to the assistance of those who fell, helping them up again as soon as they had recovered.

Marshal Saxe declared on the occasion of the battle arranged in his honour, that if two real armies should fight with as much fury as was displayed by these young fellows on stilts, the battle would deserve no better name than that of butchery.

## HOW THE BIRCH HURTS.

SOME weeks ago we published an article, "How the Cat Hurts." It may interest our juvenile readers to know something of what it is to be *birched* in one of Her Majesty's gaols.

The birch is a very different instrument of torture from the cat. The former is made up of a number of long birch twigs, whilst the latter is really a whip with nine knotted small cord lashes. When the cat is administered the prison doctor must be present, but when the birch is put on it is only necessary for the inspector or superintendent of police to witness it, although the parents, or near relatives of a boy sentenced to be flogged may be present at the castigation. When a dose of the cat is dealt out, none but those connected with the prison are allowed to be there.

Like the cat, the birch may be made a very severe punishment or a comparatively trivial affair, not merely according to the number of strokes, but from the instructions given the constable who is told off to do the flogging. I have seen a boy after six strokes resemble nothing so much as a piece of raw beef, and bleeding fearfully, whilst I have also seen a boy after six strokes merely a trifle red.

Some policemen dread the duty of flogging, and after the first two strokes get a sharp order to "hit the boy and not play with him." Other constables delight in the work, and boast of their ability to draw blood at the first stroke.

Various modes of administering the punishment obtain in different parts of the country. In some places boys are placed face downwards on a form. One constable holds his arms and head firmly, whilst another does him the same service with his legs, and a third administers the punishment.

In other prisons the culprit is placed on a constable's back, and as he sits there with his arms around the officer's neck awaiting "the event," his attitude strikes a spectator more as one of affection than discomfort. Another way is to compel a boy to lean over a chair as if he were praying, then run a strap right round his legs and the legs of the chair, a constable holding his head and arms from the other side.

◆

SELFISH OF HER.—"What's the trouble over there?" said Mabel to Amy.

"She just stands under the mistletoe all the time, and won't give any other girl a chance."

◆

ROONEY: "Say, Pat, ye're a bit of a scholard; k'n you tell me who it was ordered the sun to stand shtill?"

Noonan: "I dunno. Some son of a gun of a conthractor who wanted to git a big day's worruk out of the labourin' man, ye can bet."

◆

TEACHER: "Give me the solution of the following problem:—Two cyclists start from the same point, the first going at twenty miles an hour, starting at midday, and the second at fifteen miles, starting half an hour later; where will they meet?"

Small Boy: "At the first public-house."

◆

MUST DO SOMETHING.—An inhabitant whose heels were striking sparks from the pavement as he walked, entered the water-works office yesterday, selected his clerk, and fiercely announced: "Sir, you can send up and take your old gas meter out of my house."

"This is not the gas office."

"It isn't?"

"No, sir; this is the water-works office."

"Oh, it is! Well, then send up and turn the water off! I'm not going to walk a mile and a half for nothing."

**Those kind-hearted folk who make a practice of sending copies of *P.W.* and other papers to hospitals and workhouses at Christmas, will be able to afford extra gratification this year by means of this, our Special Double Number.**

# STORIES OF MONTE CARLO.

BY JOAN BARRETT.

## No. 6.

## KISMET.

### PART I.

"I WONDER," said Miss Rahr, as she daintily joined her pink-tipped fingers together, and cast an admiring glance down at the gleaming jet buckles upon her little shoes, "why so many women at this place have white waists and black tails!"

"*My dear!*" exclaimed the little, fragile woman at her side, who lay half buried among cushions piled recklessly in a lounge chair.

"I guess," observed Miss Rahr, after a moment of reflective silence, "that none of them have the courage to change it about. I've been looking out at meal times for a woman with a black waist and a white tail. Up to now I haven't seen one!"

Her friend gave a gasp that was almost plaintive, and wriggled herself into a sitting position. She fixed her green eyes in amazed interrogation upon Miss Rahr's strong, beautiful face.

"So I'm going to set them a good example," continued Madge Rahr, in a virtuous tone. "I've got a pretty black waist, and I've ordered a white tail to go with it. I shall wear them at dinner to-night."

Countess Nadjeskey's expression of bewilderment deepened. When she was puzzled she generally smoked. It cleared away the mist from her brain and gave it full play, she said.

So now she drew out a pretty cigarette case, and gently extracted a neatly-rolled cigarette from it. Madge, raising her eyes from their contemplation of the shoes, watched her friend as she lit the cigarette and placed it between her white teeth.

"I never see you handling cigarettes," said she, "without thinking what a pity it is that you have no children. You always touch those little rolls of tobacco so softly and tenderly."

The Countess gasped again. Miss Rahr was continually giving her electric shocks.

"Won't you take one?" she asked, pronouncing each syllable of the harsh English words with careful distinctness.

"I guess I won't," said Madge, shaking her brown head. "I tried once. I'd a headache, and the Count reckoned that a cigarette would steady my nerves. I burnt my nostrils, and made my lips sore, and nearly died through swallowing the horrid smoke, that would go down my throat instead of coming out at my mouth. And the ash fell off and burnt a big hole in my tail—what is it?" she demanded as the Countess ceased to smoke, and raised pathetically inquiring eyes wide with wonder; "oh, I dare-say it seems funny to you. We American women chew candy, and you Russians smoke. We're all much of a muchness, aren't we?"

"Candy is so sweet," the Countess remarked with a shudder. "It does not soothe like tobacco, and it is sticky. I know you won't think me rude when I say that you Americans would be absolutely delightful if you gave up candy and substituted tobacco. You would be more—more restful. I never look at you without thinking of champagne."

"And you always remind me of a dear little drowsy kitten, all softness and purr," said Madge; "you look like one, too, in that furry gown. I wonder you don't get suffocated wearing such warm things in this hot climate. There's your husband," she added, with a perceptible change in her tones that struck curiously upon the Countess's nerves. "He's going into the Casino, and is muffled up to the eyebrows in sables. What on earth do you wear in your own country?"

"Furs," answered the Countess. "Lots and lots of fur." She rose from her chair, and, leaning over the balcony, watched her husband's figure pass up the wide, carpeted steps that led to the doors of the Casino.

The bright sunshine seemed to turn his fair hair into gold. It played upon his short, pointed beard as he paused at the top of the steps to speak to another gentleman. How young, how noble, how full of life and vigour he looked! The searching rays of the sun brought out no imperfections in his pale complexion, which appeared to be as fair and clear as a healthy child's. His blue eyes were keen, and sparkled with animation.

The Countess watched him between her half shut eyes, puffing pale clouds of smoke from her pursed up lips. In the sunlight that fell with full force upon her, one saw many silver threads running among the blonde meshes of hair that she wore in a loose and picturesque twist low upon her somewhat thin neck.

Her eyes gleamed like narrow slits of green glass. In the easy, comfortably-fitting velvet gown that she wore, her spare figure gained a fictitious air of substantiality. But even the thick folds of the material failed to disguise completely her extraordinary thinness.

Her small, pink palms rested like rose petals upon the iron balustrade. They might have been a baby's hands, so tiny and soft and helpless they seemed.

The Count shook hands with his friend, turned to glance after a young girl, who ran lightly down the steps, carrying a huge bunch of violets, and then passed into the Casino. The Countess watched and smoked, until a faint sigh that was half strangled in its birth, caused her to turn her head with a quickness of movement quite foreign to her habitual indolence of action.

Madge was looking at the Casino doors with a pained expression in her face. When her friend looked at her, she shifted her glance to the gilded head that adorned the front of the building, and her sigh became a smile.

"I wonder," she said, "if that is old Francois Blanc? That queer glory thing round his unfortunate head always reminds me of a lot of spikes. He looks just as though he knows he has been beheaded and stuck up there as a warning to other financiers."

She regarded the head contemplatively for a few moments.

"After all," said she, with a wistful attempt at mirthfulness, "the spikes are rather suggestive, aren't they, Olga? The artist must have intended to preach a moral. Much glory, many spikes. Phew, how hot the sun is!"

The Countess threw away her partly finished cigarette, and lit another with a great deal of care. A waiter, anxiously hovering near, rushed forward to draw down the red and white striped sun blinds.

"Don't!" commanded Madge, sharply.

The waiter was used to impesativeness, but he jumped nervously. The Countess's eyes grew more and more narrow.

"I like the sun," Madge said, by way of explanation. "What is the use of coming here if one shuts it out? One had better stay in one's own country."

"When the blinds are down," said the Countess, gravely, "one cannot see the people passing in and out of the Casino."

The sun glowed in Madge's cheeks, mounting to her forehead and losing itself among her glossy hair.

"I have often felt surprised," the Countess said between dainty puffs, "that you have never married. You are unusually beautiful for an American. Unfortunately, your face is a fraud!"

"*Olga!*"

There was such shame, such piteous, miserable deprecation in the girl's voice, that the Countess's heart gave a quick leap of sympathy.

Her voice was very steady when she spoke again, and the careless expression in her face had deepened.

"Yes, dear, it *is* a fraud. You give strangers an impression of owning great strength of character, when in reality you are sadly weak. Forgive my candour. Have you ever remarked the fact that you and I say things about each other to one another that would have ripped our friendship in half long ago had we been like other women? I have noticed it often. I called your face a harsh name, and yet we are still friends."

Madge laughed uneasily.

"I don't think I've forgiven you, though," she said, with a catch in her voice. "It's rather a take down to one's pride to find that one's best friend has found one out. You wrapped up your pill in sugar by calling me beautiful; but the sugar has rubbed off somehow, and the pill sticks in my throat, Olga!"

She laid her hand upon the Countess's arm, looking into the pale, fascinating face almost timidly.

"I guess it makes me feel sick to think what a puny little soul I own."

"We didn't make our souls."

"That doesn't hinder us from trying to make them bigger," cried Madge.

The Countess shrugged her shoulders, and knocked off the ash from the tip of her cigarette.

"We can try, and keep on trying. Nothing hinders us, as you say. Only our efforts are thrown away, and the exertions we have forced ourselves to make leave us less strength with which to meet danger. Invalids frequently become worse in health through overtaxing their strength. Moral and physical weaknesses are greatly alike."

"You think that we can't help ourselves?" said Madge, knitting her brows, but with a sudden hopeful light shining in her eyes. "You mean that we must just let ourselves glide, and submit to circumstances? Is that it?"

The Countess nodded.

"Yes. That is it. Fate is all powerful. We can do nothing. What is to be will be," she declared, gravely.

"But drowning folks would often die if they made no fight for life," Madge objected after a moment's reflection.

"If they are rescued, it is because Destiny willed it. Their efforts to avoid drowning had nothing whatever to do with the seeming result," the Countess declared in tones that carried conviction, and struck coldly upon her listener's heart.

Madge shivered. Rising impetuously from her seat, she pulled a rose to pieces, dropping the petals upon the pavement below.

The large *café* opposite the hotel, was teeming with life. A band of Hungarian performers, looking picturesque in their national costume, was playing a sad, weird melody, that seemed to take the warmth from the sun and the vivid colours from the glaring beds of flowers in the gardens in front.

As Madge listened to the music, the seats filled with smartly-dressed people, the streets gay with horses and carriages and pedestrians, the chinking of glass, the hurrying forms of the busy waiters, and the murmur of many voices, died and faded away from her sight and hearing.

The wind seemed to moan and to shriek long agonised wails of misery, dead leaves rustled beneath dying trees, and skies heavy with rain. Forgotten voices called to other forgotten voices, and everything spoke of death.

"Oh!" Madge said, with a start.

Someone had crept behind her. The perfume of violets dilated her nostrils with pleasure. It was Count Serge, who had joined his wife and her friend, bringing with him a bouquet of flowers for each lady.

"What an exquisite melody," he said, bending over the balcony by Madge's side. "I don't know why it stirs me so. You are sure to laugh at me, Miss Rahr, when I confess that it is almost more than I can stand."

"How much money have you lost, *mon ami*?" the Countess asked, with a suspicion of sarcasm in her level tones.

A frown passed over the Count's white brow, and refused to rest there. He turned a reproachful glance upon his little wife, as she lay curled up among her furs, smoking incessantly.

"What a question, Olga," he cried. "Does it imply that my losses and not the music are responsible for my emotion? I hope you are not going to develop a sarcastic tendency. It is not a graceful accomplishment for a lady."

Madge was playing restlessly with the violets in her hands. As she leant over the balcony, they seemed to slip from her fingers. The bouquet falling, struck a man passing beneath. He glanced up in astonishment, smiled, and raised his hat. Count Serge's lips drew themselves together beneath his tawny moustache.

"My unhappy flowers," he murmured. "How cruel of you to let a stranger have them."

"I guess he's not a stranger. I've—I've met him at Nice," Madge said, hurriedly. She spoke in an almost apologetic tone, the varying colours coming and going in her face. Her eyes were bent upon the ground. She felt, with angry resentment against her weakness, that she looked confused and had an air of being ashamed because she had thrown away Count Serge's flowers.

The Countess's inscrutable eyes never left Madge's face. Miss Rahr grew more uneasy. She drew out her watch.

"My goodness!" she cried, making a poor attempt at being astonished. "I'd no idea that it was so awfully late. The dressing bell must have rung an age ago. We've only got an hour to dress in, and I do want such a lot of time to make myself smart to-night."

She escaped from the room, giving the Countess a wistful smile as she flitted past the lounge chair. With her foot upon the lower step of the stair, she paused and glanced out at the waving palms and the climbing roses growing around their trunks.

"I *did* mean to throw those violets away," she said to herself; "but I did not think for a moment that they would hit anybody. And George Gordon, too, of all people in the world. Olga would say it was fate—I wonder—oh, I am sick of everything! If dad would only take me across the herring-pond to-morrow, right away to New York, I guess I'd be happier by a long chalk."

Clenching her little hand, she shook a doubled fist at the gay-looking Casino.

"I hate you!" she said, vindictively. "You look no end smiling. You're a great devouring monster. You're full up with tragedies, and who would think it to look at you?"

She walked up the stairs, the discontented expression deepening in her eyes.

"How much *did* he lose?" she said, below her breath. "Dad guessed he'd had pretty big losses for the past fortnight. Olga never says anything. I've a great mind to shake her! There's her husband going to the bad as fast as he can go, and she just sits in a comfortable chair and smokes cigarettes! It's heartless, that's what it is, *there!*"

### PART II.

THE little door that divided the library from the smoking-room of the large hotel had been left open by some hurried or careless person.

Countess Nadjeskey, coming into the library in search of a book, caught the sound of men's voices and low chuckling laughs issuing from the smoking-room. Someone was speaking Russian. The Countess coughed slightly in order to make the speakers aware of her presence.

A louder laugh followed, then another low chuckle. The Countess listened, her little pale face growing harder, and her green-tinted eyes gleaming strangely.

"I tell you, my boy, it is the easiest conquest I've ever met with," said the soft, musical voice of her husband. "The girl is like wax. She's a fine young creature—a perfect type of womanhood. I like those big brown-haired beauties."

"Oh, she's a handsome girl. But I'm inclined to think you've underrated her moral qualities. She doesn't look one of your babyish, yielding women. Her face is a strong one. Tell you the truth, Serge, I believe you're mislead by your confounded vanity. The women make such a lot of you because you've got a mixture of Russian and German titles, and because you're rather a good-looking chap. But Miss Rahr is not what you take her for. Don't you flatter yourself!"

"Do you consider yourself to be a good judge of women's character?" asked Serge, lazily.

"Oh, rather! I don't say I've had quite so many opportunities of dissecting 'em as you've had; but, on the whole, I'm a decent judge of the cattle."

"I'll bet you—any odds you like—that by the tenth of this month Miss Rahr is in Paris with me," said Serge. "Do you take me?"

The Countess shivered. By degrees she had crept nearer and nearer to the open door. Her movements were always feline; just now, her crouching, lithe body suggested a panther waiting to spring upon its victim.

"Hum! There's a fellow hanging about Miss Rahr. A big Englishman. He's sweet on her. Leave her alone, Serge. Hang it all, man, we can't make a bet like that. It doesn't seem decent."

Serge laughed heartily.

"Admit that you see no chance of winning your money, Ivan," said he, coldly. "You're afraid to take me! You know I shall win!"

An oath fell from the other man's lips. The Countess heard a sound of chairs being pushed back, a smack as of hands meeting, and Ivan's voice saying:

"Done! But I shall be the winner this time. You've only got two days to work in. You'll lose, old man!"

Serge made a reply that was replete with easy confidence.

"And how about your wife?" asked Ivan in answer to it.

"Olga? Oh, she'll be all right. I'll leave her in your charge, and may her sweet society compensate you for your loss of the bet."

Drawing away from the door, the Countess's hand struck against some hard object in her dress pocket. It was her cigarette case. Pulling it out, she carefully selected a cigarette, and went from the room. Her quiet footfall made no sound upon the rich softness of the carpet.

As she passed through the wide hall a young, stalwart

"Thro' the Battle Smoke?" Ay! thro' fire and water, brimstone and treacle, if need be! Thro' anything to get that splendid sixpennyworth—*Pearson's Library.*

Englishman, with abject misery written in every line of his honest face, came down the stairs. He was brushing almost rudely by the Countess, when she laid her hand decisively upon his arm. The young man looked up with a start.

"It's no use," he said, wretchedly. "I've asked her. She doesn't care a rap for me."

"Did she tell you so?"

He nodded, carefully keeping his eyes turned from her calm face.

"There's someone else in the way—someone whom she can't marry, she says. She's none too happy. What a horrid world this is!"

"It does not seem to be a particularly cheerful place just at present," the Countess said, softly. "But don't lose heart, George. And don't go away in what you call a huff. Remember that Madge is as dear to me as my own daughter would be had I one. You may trust me to do my best for you. I should like to see you married. I feel so sure that you would be happy together."

He was only a boy, and his young face flushed rosily with hope. He caught her hand, and pressed it hard.

"How good you are," he exclaimed. "I do love Madge so much; you can't think what it feels like to put all your bricks into one castle, and then to see the whole airy building swept away!"

"I think I understand," she said, going away and leaving him.

• • • • •

Count Serge had given his valet a holiday. It was Carnival time, and the man had begged permission to go to Nice.

He had laid out his master's clothes before leaving the house, and, in obedience to the Count's instructions, had cleaned a pair of pistols, that were the pride of his master's heart, and had taken the life of many a soft, white pigeon in their time.

The Count was astonished on entering his dressing-room to find his wife sitting in his most luxurious chair, with the inevitable cigarette between her lips. He felt an uncomfortable twinge at seeing her. His losses at the Casino had been tremendous, and it was his wife's fortune that he had gambled away. It was unlike Olga to make a scene, especially about money matters. But even an exemplary patient woman may lose patience, and, really, he had been reckless in his play. He had not yet dared to reckon up his losses.

"What a charming surprise," he said, politely. "You do not often favour me with your company, Olga—not often enough."

Taking no apparent notice of his words, the Countess rose from her seat, walked to the door of the dressing-room, that opened into the corridor, and swiftly turned the key in the lock. The Count watched her with smiling eyes, his eyebrows slightly raised with surprise.

"I am not a melodramatic person. I hate melodrama," said the Countess, brusquely. "I should not have locked the door had I not received ample proofs of your cowardice. I do not intend that you shall run away, and your pride will prevent your calling for help. It is in bad taste, perhaps, to remind you of the fact that you were a poor man when I married you. I have remained silent while you squandered my money, and frittered away my estates bit by bit. I never complained about your pleasures. You have had a free rein and no curb, *mon ami.*"

"I shall be glad to know what you mean," cried the Count, furiously. "Have you locked me in simply for the pleasure of abusing me?"

"I do not abuse you. I state facts. I have forgiven and overlooked much in your conduct. Now I can forgive and overlook no more. I know of the horrible bet that you have made with Ivan Micavitch. I love Madge more than anything in the world. Her honour is more to me than you. Would you know why I locked the door? I will tell you, Serge Nadjeskey, *you have to fight a duel with me!*"

"You are mad, Olga! A duel with my wife—with a woman! It is absurd!"

She read the terror in his eyes, and saw it graven around his quivering lips. His face had grown a dull grey.

"He looks like the tip of my cigarette before it falls," she thought. Aloud she said:

"I am not mad. There is no absurdity in your fighting with me. It is more brave than to desert me, as you proposed doing. Come, take up your pistol. You need not tremble, Serge. The advantage lies, as it has always lain, with you. Can you not think that you are shooting at a pigeon?"

She took up one of the pistols that the man servant had cleaned and charged, and held it out to her husband. He drew back, shuddering, and raised his hands before his eyes.

"For goodness sake, put the thing down. I told Ivanovitch to charge them both. It may go off! Olga, Olga!"

"Will you take the pistol?" she demanded, pitilessly.

"Never; you are mad! I fight only with sane people!"

Her hand trembled with anger. There was a loud report, a puff of blue-grey smoke, and a dull thud that shook the room, making the dainty appointments of the dressing-table dance and jingle. The Countess ran swiftly to the door, unlocked it, and returning to the writhing heap twisting itself into convulsive shapes upon the carpet, she knelt down by its side.

"Oh, Madge," she said, "there was no other way to save you. No other way, my dear."

The form upon the carpet was still now. When a terrified maid and an inquisitive valet rushed into the room, they found the dead body of the Count, and the seemingly lifeless body of the Countess, lying side by side.

Before half an hour had passed, the rumour was rife in Monte Carlo that Count Serge Nadjeskey had committed suicide because of his terrific losses at the Casino, and that his wife had been the first person to rush to his assistance. So the Casino gained the reputation of gorging yet another life. But, later on, Madge Rahr and George Gordon were married.

*(This fascinating Series of Stories will be continued next Week.)*

## NO SOAP, IF YOU PLEASE.

It may be doubted if a tub-bath in Jamaica is a luxury. The bath-houses make a brave show in a row of low brick buildings in the rear of the hotels, each little house with a big stone tank for a bath tub.

I went out to see the baths on my first day in Kingston, and was surprised to see a sign nailed against the wall bearing the words:

"Gentlemen are requested not to use soap in the baths."

"Why are gentlemen requested not to use soap in the baths?" I asked the hotel clerk, a dignified young woman of dark complexion.

"Because it soils the water and makes it unpleasant for the next bather," she said.

"But do your guests all bathe in the same water?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she replied. "You see the tanks are so large and the pipes are small. It takes all night to fill the tanks, and the water has to last all day."

## READING AT TWO YEARS.

Previous records of precociousness in children are probably surpassed by a case which has been under the observation of several eminent German physicians, and which is described at length in a German medical journal. It is the case of an infant named Otto Göhlert, the son of a butcher in the city of Brunswick.

The most remarkable fact about this child was that he could read before he was two years old. At the age of eighteen months he began to make many inquiries of his grandmother, who was accustomed to take him out, about the letters on the signs which he saw in the street. These inquiries were answered, and, having learned the letters, the boy began to combine them so as to make words, and these words he pronounced distinctly in the hearing of his elders. At about this time he asked what letters composed his own name. He was told, and, presently, after poring a long time over a newspaper, he brought it to his parents and showed them where he had found the name printed in the paper. It was soon found—the child being still under two years of age—that he could read many words, and that he pronounced long and difficult German words with perfect accuracy.

Three well-known physicians of Brunswick examined the child, and ascertained beyond all doubt that he could pronounce correctly what he read.

They found that, at the tender age of less then twenty-four months, he played by preference in the house with books and papers, and when in the street liked to frequent book-shops.

At the same time he is perfectly healthy. Everything in his physique is normal and well regulated. His hair and complexion are fair, but his eyes are clear brown.

The physicians have concurred in the opinion that little Otto Göhlert possesses "an extraordinary gift for retaining mnemonic impressions;" but they are unable to assign any reason, physical or otherwise, for his precocity.

◆

Old Gent: "Have you vanishing ink?"

Tradesman: "Yes. Going to make sure of no breach of promise suits?"

Old Gent: "Oh, no; going to give my daughter a cheque for a thousand as a wedding present."

◆

Mr. Chimpanzee: "That ostrich eats enough for two birds. What do you suppose makes it so greedy, Mrs. C.?"

Mrs. Chimpanzee: "I heard the keeper say it swallowed a pair of strong eye-glasses yesterday, and they magnify its appetite."

## MY CHOICE.

### At Eighteen.

Oh, many a lad goes a-sighing,
And vows that for love he is dying;
Gay glances are sent,
Sweet flatteries spent,
And all Cupid's arrows go flying;
But the only lad that my heart can win
Is the laughing lad with the dimpled chin.

### At Twenty-eight.

There are laddies with brown eyes and blue,
There are laddies with bold hearts and true;
But I always look down
Betwixt smile and frown,
And never give heed when they woo;
For give me the purse of gold within,
Give me the man with lots of tin;
You may keep the lad with the dimpled chin.

## 44 BURGLARY INSURANCE CLAIMS PAID.

The claims sent in by Messrs. J. Robertson, 6, Perth Road, Dundee; A. Butterworth, 226, Queen's Road, Dalston, under our Burglary and Housebreaking Insurance System, have been satisfactorily settled by the Ocean Co.

## WASHING ROYAL LINEN.

The Imperial family at Berlin have all their washing done at the ordinary metropolitan laundries—a matter which is a source of much annoyance to the Empress, for when she visited the Augusta Hospital the other day, she was enthusiastic in her admiration of the laundry department of the establishment, and remarked that she would give anything to have something of the same kind fitted up at the palace, and on seeing the astonished looks of all those around her, she continued: "Yes, it is so; I am obliged to send all the washing, even that of the children, to be laundered in the city, which causes no end of inconvenience;" the inference being that the supply of linen at the Court of Berlin is limited.

The members of our Royal family have all their linen laundered at a special establishment maintained for the purpose in the outskirts of London, near Hounslow; and no matter where they happen to be, whether at Balmoral or Osborne, the Royal linen is despatched thither. Public attention was drawn to this fact a few years ago by a strike of the employees, who complained of being underpaid. The work is, it must be confessed, most perfectly accomplished, and the bleaching is done in the open air only, instead of artificially, which is impossible in London, owing to the sooty character of the atmosphere.

Empress Eugenie remains on record as the only crowned head parsimonious enough to have torn linen mended, and no less than fifteen seamstresses were kept in the permanent establishment of the Tuileries household for this purpose. At the British, Berlin, Viennese, Spanish, and Russian courts all the torn linen is distributed in immense bales to the various hospitals and charitable institutions from time to time.

At the Vatican the linen and clothing of the Holy Father are kept in a state of proper repair by a pious order of Sisters of Mercy, all of whom are of noble birth, and known as the "Ladies of Reparation." It is they who make for him his white cassocks and embroider his slippers and adorn his altar and table covers with rare old lace. Their costume differs slightly from that of other Sisters of Mercy, in that their dresses are blue, with long trains.

## HOW TO BECOME BALD.

A clever writer, the possessor in all probability of a bald head, has proved that baldness is a product and sign of culture. If baldness is a sign of culture—something devoutly to be wished—we shall perform a public service in showing how this condition can be quickly reached. Non-scientific people will possibly study our advice in order to do the opposite, and thus keep their hair as long as possible.

"We lose, in the course of time," said Voltaire, "our teeth, our hair, and our ideas." That may be true as far as the teeth and ideas are concerned, but we cannot always depend upon losing our hair.

Persons who long for the proofs of culture must resort at once to methods of art. The first good rule is to keep the head warm. In summer, if you wish to become bald, do not wear a straw hat. On the contrary, let your head-gear be a felt or cloth hat, a derby, or a stovepipe. In winter, always wear a fur cap. While in the house, at all times of the year, do not fail to wear a fez or a cap.

Women whose light hats do not wear off the hair rapidly enough may accomplish that end by using heavy switches of false hair. A roll of false hair will work even more rapidly than a fur cap, as the hairs will fall out by the hundreds when the roll is heavy enough.

The beloved nightcap, so dear to our grandmothers, is to be highly recommended also. The helmet of the officer and policeman is also a splendid invention. What is the effect of these head coverings? They make the head perspire. Moisture is the deadly enemy of hair. On the back of the head, near the neck, usually untouched by the hats and caps, it is seldom that one sees baldness.

A bald ring often marks the position of the hat or cap. Our young dandies who curry their heads every morning with two brushes, and in the course of the day comb their hair whenever they see a mirror, are on the right path of baldness. That is also true of women who allow their hair to be combed by unpractised servants.

The *savant* Gazenave found the heaviest and the most beautiful hair on heads which had never been touched by scissors. People who wish to become bald should have their hair cut as often as possible. It is encouraging to notice that this practice is increasing. Children have their hair cut often in the absurd belief that the hair will become thicker. Again, go as often as possible to the barbers. In the brushes and combs of the barber shop, used indiscriminately upon the heads of all kinds of customers, micro-organisms destructive to the hair, flourish in great quantities.

The investigations of Lossar, the dermatologist, have proved beyond a doubt that these parasites spread diseases. The dandruff from the heads of persons whose hair is disappearing would produce bald spots on the backs of rabbits or mice. As long as the barbers are not compelled to disinfect their brushes and combs there will be victims ready to purchase hair regenerators.

***Pearson's Library*** **is being so well received that with the next issue, published on the First of January, the size will be increased from 100 to 132 pages, with a proportionate increase in the amount of reading matter and the number of illustrations.**

# QUESTIONS WORTH ANSWERING.

## REPLIES.

### 2269. Which Nation Possesses the Greatest Number of Distinct Flags, Excluding those used for Signal Purposes?

The British. Excluding those used for signal purposes there are twenty-six, made up as follows: Three Royal Standards, two Admiralty flags, three ensign flags (red, white, and blue), the flag of Scotland, flag of the Lieutenant of Ireland, Union Jack, Union Jack (merchant), commodore's broad pennant, ordnance, military ministers, Charges d'Affaires, British consuls, British Custom House, Admiralty tender, and victualling flags, four Trinity House flags, viz.: master's, ensign, Jack, Burgee; Cinque Ports, Thames Conservancy flag. Of the forty-nine chief yacht clubs in the world forty-five, with distinctive flags, are stationed on the British coasts. Russia comes next with twenty-two national flags, and France third with twenty-one.

### 2270. Why should some Animals have more Numerous Offspring than Others?

Apart from the physiological facts of the question, which are only facts and not reasons, it would seem that the answer must be sought in that principle of compensation which is universal throughout Nature. Creatures which have the most numerous offspring are invariably found to be those most liable to the attacks of other creatures and the accidents of climate. Therefore it is plain that, unless the species is to become extinct, the loss must be met by superfluity of offspring. The most striking example is probably the spawn of fish. If all the eggs of fish came to maturity the ocean would be choked with their bodies, but nearly every fish preys either on the spawn or the bodies of other fish, and so the balance is maintained. The rabbit plague in Australia is merely due to the fact that there are no animals there which can prey on the rabbits, while, on the other hand, were it not for their slaughter by man, elephants, producing only about six offspring in a century, would not only keep up their numbers but multiply.

### 2273. Has there ever been a War in which one Side Won every Battle and Skirmish?

Yes, there have been at least five such wars. In that between the United States and Mexico in 1845-48 the Mexicans got the worst of every encounter, from pitched battles to fights between parties of rangers and guerillas, and even single combats, of which there were not a few. In the Indian campaigns of 1845-6 and 1848-9 the British won every battle and skirmish. Prussia did the same in the Austro-Prussian war of 1866. Lord Napier won the Abyssinian war in 1867 without a single reverse, and Lord Wolseley conducted the Soudan campaign with equally unbroken success.

### 2275. Which of the Wild Animals has Proved on the Whole the most Serious Enemy to Man?

All things considered, the distinction must be accorded to the wolf. Not only during the savage state, but right up through all the stages of his progress, man has been perpetually harried by this irreconcilable foe. There is no country in Europe whose archives do not show that for centuries the wolf has been an outlaw with a price on his head. In the pastoral ages his depredations must have done incalculable damage. Even in the present day his ravages cost Russia no less than two and a half millions a year, a fact which proves that even now the warfare of man against the wolf is by no means at an end. In tropical countries, and more especially as regards human life, the tiger would divide the honours with the wolf. If reptiles be included in the term "wild animals," then the snake stands easily first in all tropical countries as the most mortal foe of man, although, in the industrial sense with regard to injury inflicted on flocks and domestic animals, its power for evil is trifling.

### 2271. Which of the Learned Professions has most Changed in Public Estimation in the Last Five Centuries.

The clerical. In the Middle Ages it was common for even the sons of kings to take holy orders. Yet a high dignitary of the Church, even if of humble birth, such as Thomas-à-Becket, could defy the power of the greatest monarchs. By the middle of the fourteenth century, the influence of the clergy had so far declined that the poet Chaucer was able to satirise them with impunity; yet men of Royal blood, such as the Beauforts and the Poles, did not disdain to minister at the altar. At the Reformation there was a tremendous change in the position of the clergy. It became usual for the patrons of livings to bestow them upon their dependants, and even upon their servants. The contempt with which Queen Elizabeth treated the highest dignitaries of the Church is well known. During the century which followed her accession scarcely a single person of noble descent took holy orders. The main body of the clergy came to be regarded as a plebeian class. A waiting-woman, Macaulay tells us, was considered in the time of the Stuarts to be the most suitable helpmeet for a parson. If he had a family, the reverend man had often to send his sons to the plough, while his daughters went out to service. Since the eighteenth century, when the value of tithes considerably increased, the status of the clergy has improved until the present day, when they rank socially with the other learned professions, and in Court functions take precedence of them.

### 2272. What Fruits were Cultivated in England prior to the 17th Century?

Apples, plums, walnuts, and some other nuts, and possibly pears are indigenous. The cherry was introduced from the eastern shores of the Black Sea at a very early date while the Romans occupied this island. Other fruits came much later, and more valuable varieties of indigenous fruits were also introduced. The sixteenth, the century of exploration and research, was naturally a century in which many new fruits found their way to this country. Grapes were first cultivated here about 1528. Gooseberries came from Flanders before 1540, and melons and apricots from Asia Minor about the same date. Nectarines and peaches were brought from Persia—a land of fruits—in 1562, currants from Greece perhaps a little earlier. Before the end of the century figs from Southern Europe, quinces from Austria, mulberries from China and from Italy, pineapples from Brazil had all found a home among us. The strawberry (from Flanders) was here before them (about 1530). It thus appears that almost all the well-known English fruits were grown here before the 17th century. The raspberry, however, is an exception; the earliest date at which it can be traced is 1696. It came from Virginia.

### 2276. Which Office in this Country Carries the Highest Pension with it?

If, as some authorities have it, Royal incomes are classed as pensions, then the office of the Monarch carries with it the highest pension. Thus, the Queen's Privy Purse (£60,000), Salaries of Household (£131,260), Expenses of Household (£172,500), Royal Bounty, etc., show a total of £385,000 per annum. To the Prince of Wales the following amount is paid: Prince of Wales, £40,000; Princess of Wales, £10,000; for their children, £36,000. The total is £86,000 per annum. It may be objected that this is not strictly within the scope of the question. Allowing this, the Pension List includes several amounts of about £2,000 each, but these are for actual service. Thus, the Governor of Chelsea Hospital receives £500, in addition to £1,300 as Field Marshal and £300 pension for wounds, making a total of £2,100. From the finance accounts we find that for judicial services twenty-one pensioners draw pensions to a total of £43,482, an average of £2,070. But the Trustees of Hereditary Pensions receive £42,642, and as the number of pensioners is but twelve, the average here is £3,554 per annum. A return of pensions granted by the sovereign in perpetuity, shows that the Duke of Richmond receives £19,000 yearly. This is the commutation of a duty of one shilling per chaldron on coals exported from the Tyne and consumed in England.

### 2277. Which Historical Career Full of Early Promise has Ended most Disappointingly?

That of King Solomon. He began as the beloved of his people, with vast resources at his back, a powerful empire, and an unparalleled reputation for general sagacity and for statesmanship. He ended by leaving his kingdom nearly bankrupt and otherwise enfeebled; his people were discontented, and ready to abandon the dynasty as soon as they had a grievance. He was expected, and with reason, to impart permanent strength to the State, and he dealt it irreparable blows. Another remarkable instance of a promising career that came to little was that of the young Caligula, Emperor of Rome. He succeeded to the throne A.D. 37, and his early actions were such that his people could not show their affection warmly enough. This turned his brain; he became a mad tyrant, and when he was assassinated in A.D. 41 he had not a friend left to avenge him.

### 2278. Which Note is Struck most Frequently on the Piano in Ordinary Playing?

To ascertain which note is struck most frequently, we must first find what keys are most frequently used, and then find which note is struck the most in those keys. Now the keys that are used the most for musical composition are, C major, G major, containing one sharp, and F major, containing one flat, the reasons being that those keys are easier to play on keyed instruments, such as piano or organ, and because keys with few sharps or flats are better adapted for instruments in an orchestra. This being found, our next step is to find which note occurs the most in those keys. The note G occupies this position, for G is the fifth of the tonic C, and is also the root note of the chord of the dominant of C. It is the keynote of the scale of G. It also forms part of the tonic and dominant chords of F. It is the sub-dominant of D, the third of E flat major and E minor, besides taking part in other chords and combinations.

### 2279. Which is the most Remarkable Historical Instance of Individual Presence of Mind?

Considering at the time he was only a lad of fifteen, Richard the Second's courage and promptitude exhibited on the fall of Wat Tyler in Smithfield stands easily first. He was inexperienced both in war and politics, and practically undefended. Before him was a host of half savage rebels, infuriated by the murder of their chief under their very eyes. It is almost inconceivable that a lad of Richard's years should have had the presence of mind and cold-blooded courage to ride up to the bent bows and lowered pikes of the rebels as he did, and turn what an instant's delay would have made a revolution and a disaster into a triumph for himself and a guarantee of peace for the Kingdom. Many stories are, of course, told of instances of presence of mind exhibited by historical personages, but too many of them are apochryphal, while this has the added merit of being absolutely authentic.

### 2280. In which Part of the World is the Greatest Unbroken Extent of Level Surface?

In South America. It is pre-eminently the continent of plains—indeed, the whole extent from the mouth of the Orinoco to the mouth of the La Plata is practically one great plain. Of its three divisions the Llanos of the Orinoco are so flat that the motion of the rivers can scarcely be detected over an area of 200,000 square miles. The Selvas occupy the Amazon valley, and cover an area of 1,200,000 square miles, and the character of its surface may be judged from the fact that not a single impediment to navigation occurs in the course of the Amazon as it crosses it. The Pampas cover 750,000 square miles of nearly level country still further south. The prairies of North America, the Sahara, and the interior of Australia, though, on the whole, immense plains, do not present the same unbroken level throughout. The prairies consist mainly of a "rolling country" of low, wave-like swells; the Sahara is crossed by mountains sufficiently high to be at times snow-covered, while in other parts it is much below sea-level; and the Australian plains are interrupted in various parts by low hill ranges.

## CONDITIONS.

*We shall be glad to receive replies to any of the questions asked here from our readers. Each reply must bear the writer's name and address. We shall print the best reply to each question, and shall pay for all matter printed at our ordinary rate of two guineas a column. The same reader may send replies to any number of queries. Envelopes should be marked "Replies," in the top left-hand corner, and answers to the questions in any issue of the paper must reach us by first post on the Tuesday of the week following that for which the paper is dated. Payment will only be made for replies published. Authorities on which replies are based must be given. Half-a-crown will be paid on publication for every question received which is considered worthy of insertion.*

## QUESTIONS.

2301. Why does a drop of water evaporate more quickly on a moderately hot plate than on a very hot one?

2302. In which industry is it most important for workmen to possess the keenest appreciation of different shades of colour?

2303. Which national disaster has proved the greatest blessing in disguise?

2304. In which European country is the telephonic system the most highly developed?

2305. Which of our sovereigns may be described as having had the best luck?

2306. Which is the most remarkable instance of the improvement of fruit by cultivation?

2307. Which is the most disputed point in British history?

2308. In which part of the world is the atmosphere most transparent?

2309. From what incident did the *Times* newspaper derive the name of "Thunderer"?

2310. Which existing fashion in dress has lasted the longest?

HOME NOTES

Is the Leading Ladies' Paper, and has

***OVER A MILLION READERS,***

though it is not twelve months old. It is rising in popularity and in circulation by leaps and bounds every week, and has as large a circulation as all the other ladies' papers put together.

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*See foot of Column 1, page 382, for particulars of the New Home Paper, under the same editorship as HOME NOTES.*

## CHRISTMAS BOTANY.

**Fresh** from their dance, they paused awhile
And looked about the room;
The Christmas candles sparkled clear,
White roses breathed perfume.
The walls, all brave with greenery,
Re-echoed Christmas folly.
"Ah," she exclaimed, "of all that grows,
Give me the dear old holly."

A little later, in a nook,
I saw the pair secluded;
Her face was flushed—and looked—well,
As likely once you, too, did.
But what had happened is much more
Than I can swear I know;
I only vouch for what he urged;
"It was the mistletoe."

Once more ere holidays were done
I saw those two, one day;
They walked as if through Paradise,
Each footstep sped their way;
And, lagging at her side, I caught
A voice to haunt dull hours,
"Why, Jack, you stupid boy! of course,
I shall wear orange flowers."

## A DEEP MINE.

**The** deepest coal mine in the United States is the Pottsville, in Pennsylvania, whose shaft is 1,576 feet deep, or nearly a third of a mile. From this great depth, 200 cars, holding four tons of coal each, are lifted every day. The cars are put upon a platform, and the whole weight of six tons is hoisted in little more than a minute, a rate of speed that makes the head swim.

A person of weak nerves should not brave the ordeal by descending the Pottsville shaft. The machinery works as smoothly as a hotel lift, but the speed is so terrific that one seems falling through the air.

The knees after a few seconds become weak and tremulous, the ears ring as the drums of these organs are forced forward by the air pressure, and the eyes shut involuntarily as the beams of the shaft seem to dash upward only a foot or two away.

As one leaves the light of the upper day the transition to darkness is fantastic. The light does not pass into gloom in the same fashion as our day merges into night, but there is a kind of phosphorescent glow, gradually becoming dimmer and dimmer.

Half way down you pass, with a roar and sudden crash, the ascending car.

At last, after what seems several minutes, but is only a fraction of that time, the platform begins to slow up, halts at a gate, and through it you step into a crowd of creatures with the shapes of men, but with the blackened faces, the glaring eyes, and wild physiognomies of fiends.

## IN A GERMAN POST-OFFICE.

**There** are two kinds of animals that live in glass cases; the one is the cobra and his friends of the serpent house in the Zoological Gardens, and the other is a clerk in a German post-office.

Accustomed as we are to our free and open postal arrangements, we cannot understand the pettiness of the German style. Nowhere, perhaps, is the difference between the English and the German spirit more clearly shown than here. In England you walk boldly into a fine large room, advancing confidently to a long shining mahogany counter, and look the clerk frankly in the face, as a man may look upon his equal. Not so in Germany.

You sneak into a stone-paved hall, where there are from one to nine (according to the size of the town) little glass windows, each with a different notice written above it. To the unpractised eye all these notices appear to be exactly alike, with the trifling difference of an "ah" or an "an," so you gaze about the various windows, and finally take your life in your hand and go up to one of them.

The window is not open, of course. But you can see through it, and gaze upon the clerk with his blue coat and red facings, and white metal buttons. What sort of trousers he wears is a source of endless speculation with me. I have seen many post-office clerks in Germany, but always the same part of them. The view always stops before the trousers begin.

After you have looked your fill in the vain hope that he may suspect that you want to talk to him, you knock a timid knock. He goes on making marks in a big book, but he says something. Of course, you do not hear him, for, being behind a glass window, he is like the good little boys who are made to be seen and not heard.

If you are a German you go on waiting. But being an Englishman, you knock again—this time with the mark that you have got in your hand ready to pay for the two-halfpenny stamps that all this pother is about. At the metallic sound the object within starts, and gazes at you in a Zoological Garden way.

Finally, realising that you mean to get at him some way or other, he raises himself, and in his turn gives the window a poke. There is a sudden metallic click, and you think perhaps some of his works have gone wrong; but he has only touched a latch which lets fall a strip (about three inches wide) of his window. This strip now stretches out towards you at right angles to the rest of the pane, and, of course, leaves an opening three inches wide above the little shelf. This slit of three inches is the German post-office clerk's idea of sociability.

A sudden flash of memory recalls to you the story named "The Gates Ajar," and you reverently bow your head, and whisper through the cleft into the world beyond your prayer that it may please the object within to grant you "one at twenty." He does not stoop. He just raps out a few odds and ends of German grammar, and clicks back his three inches of human intercourse. Then you gradually come to the conclusion that he meant to convey, in a roundabout way, the idea that his hole wasn't the right one for stamps. So you have to begin all over again.

Suddenly in comes a little boy whistling as blithely as if German clerks were mere ordinary people, trips cheerfully up to the window, and begins to play the devil's tattoo with his five-pfennig piece on the three-inch ledge, which is just the height of his head. Click goes the ledge, click goes the five-pfennig piece, and Solemnity inside gloomily opens a huge portfolio at page two, sedately tears off a stamp, and morosely lays it on the ledge. The boy whisks it off, click goes the ledge again, and all is once more still.

After a little time to screw up your courage you sidle up to the suspicious window, and go through the same performance as your little jackal boy; only there is a little hitch about the colour. You know you want a blue stamp, but he seems to think a red one is good enough for you. When you flatly refuse to have his red stamp palmed off upon you, he at length stoops, and the moment his ear catches your accent (not your words) a weird smile comes over his face; he knows that you are a foreigner, and the stamp makes its appearance out of his portfolio.

## "GOOD-BYE, GEORGE!"

**Mr. Story**, the sculptor, who began life as a lawyer, tells a good story which illustrates the fact that the emphasis which punctuates has as much to do with determining the sense of a sentence as the meaning of the words.

Once, when he was called upon to defend a woman accused of murdering her husband, he adduced as one of the proofs of her innocence the fact of her having attended him on his death-bed, and said to him, when he was dying, "Good-bye, George!"

The counsel for the plaintiff declared that ought rather to be taken as a proof of her guilt, and that the words she had used were, "Good, by George!"

◆

"What a lot of those dear, charming hospital nurses one sees about just now." "Yes, football season's on."

◆

Suburbs: "These private fireworks of yours could be seen two miles away. I had no idea you were going to have such a display."

Semi-Detached: "Neither had I. That boy of mine set them all off together."

◆

Winebiddle: "I hear that you dictated to your new typewriter an impassioned love-letter to another girl."

Gildersleeve: "Yes, it was a fictitious sweetheart. I wanted to nip in the bud any designs she might have on me in a matrimonial way."

◆

Young Smears, for his great picture of "The Blind Beggar and the Distempered Dog," got a real blind man from the streets for a model. After the last sitting the beggar remonstrated thusly:

"Beggin' your pardin', sir, but *is* my nose *quite* as red as that there?"

◆

A Cloud Dispelled.—Alonzo: "Dearest Edith, candour compels me, on the eve of our wedding, to confess that I am a——" Edith (in consternation): "Not a married man?" Alonzo: "No, but a somnambulist." Edith: "And is that all, dearest? That should not separate us. Why, papa was brought up an old-fashioned Methodist, and mamma has always been a close Communion Baptist, and they've got on very well together."

◆

The Atomic Theory.—"Before the vast race of mankind peopled the world," said the lecturer, impressively, "before the earth was fitted for his needs and his life, before there dwelt in the dim primeval forest those herds of mighty animals which have now been long extinct, before the land and seas came into being, as we now see them, there lived the first germ of the life which was to follow; and before the germ came the molecule, of which the germ was built up, and before the molecule came the atom; and before the atom came—what?"

"Please, sir, 'Up Guards, and at 'em!'" shouted the rising evolutionist.

## AMENITIES OF WAR.

**Archibald Forbes** says that the abstract theory of the "amenities of war" is preposterous. You strain every effort to reduce your adversary to impotence; he falls wounded, whereupon, should he come into your hands, you promptly devote all your exertions to saving his life and restoring him to health and vigour, in order that he may go home and swell the ranks of your enemy. This is no doubt humanity, but it is supremely illogical.

Marbot recounts in his memoirs perhaps the most absurd application ever made of the theory of the "amenities." In the battle of Austerlitz a body of beaten Russians, about five thousand strong, strove to escape across the ice on the Satschan Lake. Napoleon ordered his artillery to fire on the ice, which was shattered, and men and horses slowly settled down into the depths, only a few escaping by means of poles and ropes thrust out from shore by the French.

Next morning, Napoleon, riding round the positions, saw a wounded Russian officer clinging to an ice floe a hundred yards out, and intreating help. The Emperor became intensely interested in the succour of the man. After many failures, Marbot and another officer stripped and swam out, gradually brought the ice floe towards the shore, and laid the Russian at Napoleon's feet.

The Emperor evinced more delight at this rescue than he had manifested when assured of the victory of Austerlitz. He had no compunction as to the fate of the unfortunates whom his artillery practice of the day before had sent to their death.

## A NIZAM'S SPLENDOUR.

By One who has Seen it.

**The** Nizam of Hyderabad is one of the strangest monarchs in the world. He is a finely-featured, brown-bearded, handsome man. He is in every aspect an Oriental, surrounded with strange conditions and a luxury that is very likely unmatched in the world. He is an eager sportsman, and one of the most daring tiger hunters in India. It takes but a little less than £2,000,000 to maintain his establishment for a year.

He entertains on a marvellous scale, and his wealth is lavished in every direction. He is the mightiest of all Indian princes, and nobles of absolute power in their own provinces compose his court. The banquets which he loves to give are of singular magnificence. The service is of solid gold. The surroundings are of Oriental splendour.

The Nizam's own robe eclipses them all. Made of snow-white silk, it glistens with hundreds of jewels. Ropes of pearls are about his neck and arms. Precious stones and strings of emeralds adorn his dress. The buttons are immense pearls set in diamonds. His presence seems to take one back to the fabulous times of the Arabian Nights. He lives for pleasure alone. The immense revenues, six millions sterling, which every year his subjects give, are his pocket-money. His existence is one of enjoyment.

Yet he cannot marry. Though above the law in all else, he dare not violate that decree of the country which forbids him a wife. Still, he finds a very satisfactory substitute, and 500 concubines fill his zenana or harem. They are from almost every land under the sun, and when the Royal master tires of any, she becomes a subject of his bounty, a pensioner of whom ample care is taken.

In the city is the main palace of the Nizam, where, closely guarded, he keeps his jewels. Extraordinary treasures they are. There are thousands of emeralds, pearls, and precious stones of almost every kind. It seems as if the wealth of King Solomon's mines were before us. I saw them all. They make, perhaps, the greatest collection of jewels in the world, worth £6,000,000. When I had seen them I asked their princely owner to allow me to look upon the Nizam, the largest diamond ever found. He took it from its place in an ordinary green case. He carefully opened the box, slowly unwound a dirty-looking cloth, and placed in my hand a great crystal-like mass, as big as a champagne glass, and worth just £800,000. It was the Nizam diamond. It weighs about 450 carats, and is very much larger than any other diamond on earth. From one side a large piece has been broken under curious circumstances.

The story of how the diamond was discovered is a strange one. A native workman of Portyal used to see it gleaming from a clay bank. As he came and went from work it shot its flashing fires in a mysterious way. He thought it the devil's eye, for it shone at night. He consulted a holy Brahmin, who was taken to the spot. "You did well to tell me," declared the Brahmin, "for it would have done you serious injury." The stone was dug from the bank, but the Brahmin was not sure it was a diamond. He seized a hammer, and with a blow smashed a small part of it in fragments. The larger stone was sold to the grandfather of the present Nizam for a lac of rupees.

The Nizam, with his immense revenues, can well afford to spend millions for precious stones.

Why he does so is, I think, quite as interesting as the fact that he does. Ever since the first convulsion among the native princes of India, it has been their custom to put their wealth in as portable a form as possible. Hence they buy jewels and gold.

**For Splendid Christmas Stories you should go to the issue of *Short Stories*, published on Saturday, December 22nd. It contains five complete Christmas stories, besides an instalment of Mr. Griffith's exciting serial, "The Outlaws of the Air," profusely illustrated. Price One Penny.**

## NEW AND STRANGE.

In a new bicycle invented by a German, the vibrating weight pressure of the rider on the seat spring bar assists in propelling the machine.

The newest thing in bicycle tyres is one made entirely of wool. There is no danger of puncture, and it is suitable as well for vehicles of all sorts.

A large number of sewing-machines driven by electric motors are being fitted up in the establishments of several large costumiers in Paris. The current is derived from the ordinary street mains.

I hear on good authority that the Great Western Railway Company are on the point of constructing a new line from Reading to Exeter, which will bring Plymouth within three and a half hours of London. The journey averages out at about six hours at present.

The natural phenomenon which makes it possible for one to see from a great height objects on the bottom of the ocean which are invisible from the surface, is to be put to good and profitable use by the Russian Government in searching from balloons for the positions of sunken wrecks.

It only wants a length of twine, a piece of paper, and a cardboard box to put on the market a pipe cleaner like that of Mr. E. J. Rogerson, of Summerbridge, Leeds, and truly the Patent Office cannot show a simpler combination of such ordinary articles. The stiffened twine is screwed through the pipe and extracted with the slip of paper provided. It's a handy apparatus for the smoker, and is worth a penny. It saves that in hair-pins and flower-stalks.

The Austrian State railway authorities a short time since made special arrangements for the conveyance of cycles on their express trains. Word has now reached me to the effect that, owing to the time occupied in loading and unloading the machines, and the room they occupy in the luggage vans, this practice will in future be discontinued. Of course, putting bicycles into luggage vans takes time, and delays the train. But the same remark applies to luggage of all sorts.

Mr. H. Gold, of 21, Great Eastern Street, London, E.C., the inventor and vendor of the *Science Siftings* cigarettes, has patented an ingenious method of advertising his wares. To any tobacconist who cares for them he presents a neat little frame to display in the shop window. Approaching from one side, a pretty coloured picture is perceived, which dissolves into another as you pass and look back over your shoulder. Immediately in front, however, nothing is to be seen except the goods in the shop behind.

An Australian firm of house furnishers announce through the newspapers that they have a large quantity of first-class goods on hand, and that all young married couples who agree to feather their nests throughout with goods purchased from these particular stores will have the entire sum expended returned to them on their silver wedding day. Surely this ought to conduce to greater domestic happiness. But they may not know in Australia that this advertising dodge has been tried unsuccessfully in England.

Here is work for the unemployed. The American Photographic News proposes to induce a number of people of all sorts and sizes to form an association of models, and after sufficient training to frequent the picturesque and other localities to which photographers are mostly attracted. The man might pose as a labourer coming home from work, the woman as a village damsel with a basket on her arm, or as a water nymph, or something of that sort. In the bundle of the labourer or the basket of the girl would be a number of inexpensive and suitable costumes. To prevent bother and misunderstanding, a scale of fees will probably be arranged.

Chicago—that home of expositions, fair women, and pork—contains a barber whose enterprise equals his British emulators' loquacity, nearly. Outside his shop is a trolley-pole, used for supporting the wire that supplies electricity to the tram-cars. This he has painted a bright red and white, in imitation of the sign of his trade, and has switched a wire from the trunk line into his shop, and used the current for driving an electric hair-cutting machine. The result of this stroke of ingenuity is that all the way along the street the barbers have been stirred from their lethargy, and the trolley-poles in front of their shops are breaking out in red and white rashes as if they were catching a new sort of measles.

Many a little thing is a great thing. The appliance invented by the mechanical engineer of Newport Docks is a little thing, but it is a great thing in its way. Its mission is to prevent the loss of life, which it carries out in this fashion: At the top of a pulley block of a crane are a number of pawls which drop by their own weight upon every link of the chain used. If the chain should by any chance break, the running out is stopped by the pawl acting on the same principle as that on a winch or capstan. In the case of rope, the pawls are provided with grips. This scheme is a good one, for the number of men crushed by accidents of the kind is far greater than the average person even dreams of.

*Under the above heading we publish accounts of new and curious inventions and discoveries. Should any readers have something exceptional of the kind which they would like to communicate to the world at large, we shall be very glad if they will make this the medium for doing so.*

*If any reader of* Pearson's Weekly *wishes to communicate with an expert regarding an idea for a patent let him write to the Editor of this paper, marking the envelope* Patent. *The letter will be handed to a gentleman well known in connection with patents, who will put himself in communication with the reader.*

## PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE.

Mr. Oscar Barrett has produced over forty pantomimes.

After the Queen, the most sincerely charitable member of the Royal Family is H.R.H. Princess Christian.

Hearne, the well-known Lords' professional, has been retained by the Maharajah of Patiola, who is up-to-date in all his notions, to teach the natives cricket.

Every shop in High Street and Castle Street, Windsor, has an account with the Queen. Her Majesty is most lavish with her orders, but at the same time most particular about their execution.

Mr. W. L. Alden, the humourist, who contributes a story to the Christmas Number of *P.W.*, is unlike the typical funny man, as, indeed, most humourists are. In person he is tall, thin, and venerable, with white hair and gold-rimmed spectacles.

Mr. Hall Caine spends the greater portion of each year in London. A sister of the distinguished novelist, by the way, made her *début* on the stage two years ago at the Independent Theatre. She is a young lady of charming presence, highly intelligent, and characterised by all the family vivacity and cleverness.

L. Alma Tadema is a man of ruddy complexion, who affects the style of moustache and goatee to which the third Napoleon gave its name. On his head, only partly hidden by his hair, is a scar which he received in boyhood. The artist is a man of remarkable industry, frequently snatching a little extra time at his easel from his dinner hour.

On the occasion of the Pope's episcopal jubilee the chamberlains and other honorary attendants of His Holiness subscribed to offer a handsome present. On hearing of the intention the Pope expressed his wish that the offering should be presented in cash in preference to any other form. The reason was, of course, the considerably diminishing amount of "Peter's Pence."

All her life the Queen of Denmark has been troubled with deafness, but this affliction has not prevented her from being a woman of quick intelligence, keen sympathy, and extreme energy. Not only is she an accomplished musician, but a clever artist, and sincerely devoted to painting. In many simple Danish churches the village priest points with pride to the picture over the altar which has been painted and presented by the Queen. Her Majesty is also a patron of the drama.

Queen Margherita of Italy is not only a beautiful woman, but her learning and attainments are nothing short of marvellous. She can speak fluently English, French, German, Spanish, and Latin, and in the small hours of the morning she writes verses and makes translations from her favourite classic authors. Her accomplishments include a thorough intimacy with geology, botany, and theology—ancient and modern, and she has studied deeply all the works of Darwin and Ruskin, and other philosophers.

Henri Gervex, the French artist, may be thirty-seven. He is tall, well-built, a thorough man of the world, with a quick instinct of Bohemian wit and facile repartee. He makes money easily, and spends it like a prince. There is no official fête, no diplomatic dinner, no aristocratic ball or wedding, without Gervex. Every first night finds him faithful; and a curious observer might wonder why in the world any one but a reporter would take so many notes. He carries a note-book in his vest pocket, and upon these tiny fly-sheets he jots down a profile, a hand, a stray curl, or the shadow on the drooping shoulder caused by a reflection of the box-light. When paper fails, Gervex uses his immaculate shirt-cuffs—yet he looks like a London swell. After midnight he always sups, and he has been doing this for fifteen years. Supper finished, with the continual and continuous cigarette thrown in, Gervex goes home to work. The artist never leaves his brush until dawn.

Prince Ito, Prime Minister of the Mikado's Land, has risen from the people. Unlike most of the other men now conducting the affairs of the Japanese Empire, Count Ito is not of noble birth. He came of a middle-class family, and did not receive his title until he had forced the Emperor and the country to recognise his merits as a statesman. He was one of the principal leaders of the Reform party who brought the revolution against the feudal nobles to a successful termination. The Mikado then made him his Prime Minister, which position he has held ever since. Count Ito, as head of the civil administration, is of the same eminence as Marshal Yamagata in the army. A man of large and liberal views, he reorganised the administrative, judicial, political, and financial departments of the Japanese Empire, and framed its constitution. He has almost made it a new country. He is the brother of Admiral Ito, who commands the Japanese squadron, and fought the battle in the Gulf of Petchili at the mouth of the Yalu River.

The Prime Minister of Madagascar, about whom there is much just now in the French papers, seems to be a very important person, for virtually he is the sovereign of the Island. Ranavalona III. is, of course, Queen of Madagascar in name, but as by the law of the country the Prime Minister must be her husband, the Premier Rainilaiarivony is in point of fact King. He is about sixty-five years of age, while Queen Ranavalona is thirty-three. She was married to him in 1883, but as Rain-et-cetera has held the supreme power for over thirty years, he was the husband of Rasoherina and Ranavalona II., the present Queen's predecessors. Ranavalona III. appears to be an accomodating lady, enjoying life in her own way. She might, however, be a little more respectful to her husband and Premier on the great annual festival, on which the Prime Minister gives an account in public of his stewardship to the people. Dr. Louis Catat, who was present on one of these occasions, records that Queen Ranavalona sat enthroned in a large velvet padded arm-chair, chewing tobacco, spitting, and looking very bored during the progress of the Premier's speech.

## FOOTBALL NOTES.

Bradford has recently secured the assistance of still another Welsh player, who is likely to do great things for them. Charles Wilding formerly played for the Cardiff Harlequins, a club now defunct. He was a member of the Leigh Club, in Lancashire, at the time that club was suspended. When the ban of suspension was removed, Wilding went over to the Bradford Club, and in his first match scored four tries.

Norman Biggs, the well-known Cardiff three-quarter, was when at Cambridge University more noted as a sprint runner than a football player. He was tried in the Rugby fifteen several times, but for some reason did not satisfy the authorities as to his fitness for a Blue. He had already gained a reputation in Wales, and when he went back there a place in the Cardiff team became a certainty for him. He has since gained International honours, and it cannot be denied that when in the right humour he is, without any doubt, one of the most dangerous wing players of the day.

It is not usual for a player, after ten years' service for his county, and after gaining an International cap, to discover great ability in other positions than that in which he has been wont to figure. J. Valentine, the Swinton three-quarter, was tried in the Lancashire team this season as full back. One of the halves was obliged to retire in consequence of injuries, and the powerful Swintonian was requested to operate immediately behind the scrummage. The really sound game he played in that unaccustomed position was a surprise to everybody. Later, a three-quarter was hurt, and Valentine went into his old position, and once more distinguished himself as a three-quarter. Little wonder that he became, as of yore, a first-choice three-quarter for subsequent matches.

The reappearance of S. M. J. Woods in first-class football is somewhat of a surprise, seeing that he announced his permanent retirement some three years ago. He turned out, with Froude Hancock, in the last of the three matches between Somerset and Devon last season, and the two were mainly responsible in turning the scales in Somerset's favour. This year, whilst again assisting the erstwhile champions of the South-West, Woods was for once on the losing side in a county match. His is a style of play which, whilst it commands one's admiration for its effectiveness, it is as well not to commend too loudly, lest too many imitators come forward who do not possess the Australian's special powers and aptitude for striking out an independent line. Woods and Eversheds are very valuable men to a side, but weak imitations of Woods and Evershed are worse than useless.

Few men connected with football have been more discussed and abused than have Mr. N. Whittaker and Mr. N. L. Jackson this season. The playing days of both are long since past, but each has in his own way rendered effective service to Association football. Mr. Whittaker is secretary of the Southern League, and is one of the most capable referees in the South. Recently, however, he was severely criticised (if that be not too mild a way of stating the fact) for some decisions given in a match at Luton. Though accusations for partiality and incompetence were made against him in this instance, Mr. Whittaker was supported by his committee, and it is not likely that the adverse opinions formed regarding him by disappointed partisans will be generally shared. Mr. Whittaker's profession is that of a schoolmaster. Mr. N. L. Jackson was for many years hon. secretary, and subsequently vice-president, of the London Football Association. In that position his policy was, generally, to stay the too rapid onrush of the democratic spirit in London football. In the course of controversies which have taken place in the last half-dozen years, he has not spared others when expressing his views, and he has received many hard blows in return. He has been a determined opponent of the introduction of professionalism in the South, and has been regarded as more or less the enemy of the junior element, but both have become, in spite of his opposition, very potent forces. Though his utterances have not always been characterised by discretion or good judgment, one is bound to admit his earnestness and well meaning. Perhaps Mr. Jackson is more widely-known as the founder and secretary of that most formidable of all amateur clubs, the Corinthians.

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*Signed*____________________________

*Available until midnight, December 29th, 1894.*

**To our Lady Readers:** If you are not already a reader of *Home Notes* Paper, now is an excellent time to become a regular subscriber. A most fascinating serial story, entitled, "A Tug of War," from the pen of Mrs. Hungerford, has just commenced, and our Christmas Week Number contains features of more than ordinary interest.

**No. 5.**

# HOW TO SUCCEED AS A NEWSAGENT & BOOKSELLER.

BY THE EDITOR OF "THE BOOK AND NEWS TRADE GAZETTE."

IN the retail newsagency and bookselling trade—just as is the case with the majority of other trades—a good deal has to be learnt at the outset from experience, and the experience has mostly to be paid for. It is quite impossible to offer advice to any person thinking about embarking in the business which would be calculated to safe-guard him against loss on all occasions and under all circumstances. However, for an intelligent man who combines activity with intelligence, and who has a moderate amount of capital at his back, there are worse things than that he should become a retail bookseller or newsagent.

An important point to be deliberately weighed at the beginning is the selection of a shop. It is a comparatively simple matter to enter into the first premises which appear to be to let, put up a sign, and commence business, but this course is an extremely injudicious one. Careful thought should be given to such questions as whether the shop is on that side of the thoroughfare where one encounters the stream of traffic, whether the locality is not already sufficiently served by other retailers, and whether the kind of people living in the neighbourhood are the sort of persons amongst whom, putting aside the adventitious support of nomadic foot-passengers, a steady and reliable connection can be established.

Granting that these points have been satisfactorily determined, the embryo tradesman may enter into possession, get in his stock, and commence without further delay. Prior to making any purchases, however, it is necessary that he should have the ability to gauge the tastes of the population among whom he pitches his tent. And this is much more difficult than appears on the surface. For example, if he be a newsagent and should have commenced business in, say, the Blackfriars Road, he will require vastly different papers and periodicals on his counters than if he were operating in Bayswater or Kensington.

In the former district it will be necessary for him to stock largely any papers (allowing, of course, for their respective popularity) which are purchasable at the popular halfpenny or penny. The evening papers, such as the *Star*, *Sun*, *Evening News*, and *Echo* he will probably do well with, but he will find that his sale for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Westminster Gazette*, and other penny evenings will be extremely limited. Sporting papers he will in all likelihood find very saleable, for, although sporting men very largely patronise the newsboys in the streets, there is a considerable residuum of people who are only occasional speculators upon race-results, and who are therefore usually content to get their evening papers with the finishes or their weekly papers with the tips on their road home from business in the evening.

It is not likely that the book trade of the retailer would be a heavy one, and it would be dangerous to stock any books costing more than sixpence or a shilling retail price. With any of Dicks' series, or Stevens', or with Pearson's Library, for example, he would do well, and it would be to his interest in stocking cheap books to give preference to those specially calculated to be of interest to women. For he would find that, mingling with the stream of traffic, there are a number of girls coming into business in the morning and returning in the evening, and some proportion of these, if he laid himself out to attract them by the proper exhibition of bills on his boards, and of the books themselves in his windows, he would doubtless be able in time to convert into fairly regular customers.

In none of the poorer districts of the Metropolis with which I am acquainted is the possibility great of making a living by the sale of books whose retail prices exceed a shilling. Anybody who recalls Whitechapel, Stratford, Rotherhithe, Holloway, and other similar neighbourhoods, will know that the retailers who sell heavy new books there may be counted upon the fingers of one hand.

Supposing, however, that one opens a shop in Kensington, what conditions will apply there? In all probability very different conditions indeed, and if money is not to be wasted at the commencement, it is equally necessary to be able to gauge and understand the taste of Kensingtonians before the shop is thrown open for business. Here the retail newsagent will find that, although there is a steady demand for halfpenny and penny papers, and particularly for such varieties of weekly publications as ANSWERS, TIT-BITS, *Pearson's*, and *Short Stories*, he can do an extremely good business with such high-class sixpenny illustrated weeklies as the SKETCH, ST. PAUL'S, the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, and the GRAPHIC. These it becomes his business to display in the windows, and to make a feature of in any other reasonable manner that suggests itself, for much more money can be made out of the sixpenny illustrated papers than out of papers published at a halfpenny and a penny, and with a fraction of the trouble. Here he will find that there is a steady demand for shilling magazines, such as the PALL MALL or HARPER'S, and the margin of profit on these is a fairly tangible one.

He ought to be able, too, to stock and sell a quantity of books, ranging in price from sixpence to five shillings, and, of course, if he happens to be a bookseller pure and simple, he can sell much more expensive works by making a careful study of the literature of the day, and making a display of new and popular volumes on his shelves and in his window. In Blackfriars Road and Kensington we encounter, perhaps, the extremes of the trade.

Between these extremes, situated, perhaps, midway, are such suburban districts as New Cross and Blackheath. Here a retailer will find that he can do more with threepenny papers than sixpenny, and that the demand for magazines of any higher price than sixpence is very small. A retailer always, of course, can do something towards cultivating the taste of the district in which he sells his goods, but he will find it next to impossible to force shilling magazines, no matter how marked their merits may be, upon people who feel that they can only afford to buy sixpenny ones.

When a retailer has found out what are the tastes and the spending powers of the people around him, he has acquired very valuable and important knowledge. As I said at the beginning, he will probably not be able to gauge these tastes excepting at certain pecuniary loss to himself. Perhaps the few hints I have given, however, may enable him to limit the loss to some extent. The popular taste once understood, it becomes of consequence to cater for it promptly and thoroughly. The news-retailing business is one to the success of which activity and expedition are absolutely necessary.

The tradesman should endeavour to get his morning and evening papers first in his neighbourhood, and, if that is impossible, at least first in his street, because half an hour's delay in obtaining a supply of dailies and a few moments' delay in obtaining a supply of evening papers, especially when the public is waiting for important news, frequently means a great deal of labour misspent and a very substantial monetary loss.

Many newsagents now find that it pays them to maintain bicycles on which their boys can cycle into the City and obtain batches of evening papers directly they are published, cycling back with the batches and placing them on sale immediately. Many a retailer sends his lad a trip of even two or three miles by train, so that he may be first in the field in his own district with the evening papers. All the London evening papers have a very thorough means of distribution by carts, but it is usually possible for a direct messenger to obtain a supply of evening papers a moment or two after the edition has gone to press, and get back to a shop some distance away ten minutes ahead of the cart, which may possibly be delayed by stoppages at other shops where papers have to be delivered. Ten minutes seems a small space of time, but it generally makes the sale for the night.

In reference to weekly periodicals, the same necessity for speed exists. A member of the public who is interested in a special paper, and buys it regularly, soon comes to know its day of publication, and he gets into the habit of wanting it on that day. If the retailer wishes to retain his custom he must let him have it. And this remark leads up to another point, on which too great stress cannot be laid, and that is constant civility to for customers, and an ever-manifest desire to meet their convenience.

I have known a man spend sixpence on a railway journey from Battersea to Fleet Street to obtain a single copy of a penny paper so that he might keep faith with a customer. This does not look like business on the face of it, but the fact that it is business is illustrated by the other fact that the tradesman to whom I allude is probably the most successful retail newsagent in Battersea to-day. He himself accounts for his success on the score of a desire which has never failed him—to get for customers, and particularly regular customers, what they require as speedily as ever possible.

A thoughtful newsagent or bookseller is enabled to make a good deal of money in other ways than simply by the selling of his wares. Usually, he finds that on his shop-front there is a good deal of space which can be utilised for advertising purposes. He commonly has a long board which fits in to that space which exists between the bottom of his window and the pavement. On this board he places the contents bills of the morning, evening, and weekly papers. There are various publishers, however, who arrange that he shall give a preference to their bills by paying him an annual fee, and in this way it becomes possible for a man, if he has in addition a stretch of blank wall to spare, to which he can fix enamelled tablets, to make the amount of his yearly rent in payments for the display of advertising material.

Displays of this sort serve a double purpose; they put money directly into the pockets of the newsagent, and they draw public attention to his shop.

It is highly essential that there should be something characteristic about the appearance of a shop which will excite interest in it. Much depends upon the effective dressing of a window. A newsagent's window, even under the best of circumstances, generally looks a little disorderly, but books are capable of much artistic handling. The bookseller, above all things, should be up to date, and perhaps fiction should have first conderation. Where a book is the rage, it is impossible to make too big a "splash" with it. Granted the locality is a proper one, a full shelf of the window might profitably be filled with books like "The Heavenly Twins," "The Little Minister," "Dodo," and "The Prisoner of Zenda."

A full stock should also be kept of juvenile fiction, and this should be well chosen, works by such well-known writers for boys as Henty, Kingston, and Ballantyne, receiving proper prominence in the display. Cheap lines of bound books at a shilling, like the "Canterbury Poets," and the "Camelot Classics," should also be shown, and, if the trade connection is a particularly good one, precedence in the window display may profitably be given to books in "extra" bindings, and to some of the artistically-produced volumes issued from the presses of such well-known houses as Messrs. J. M. Dent & Co., Mr. Elkin Mathews, Mr. John Lane, and others. Books on social subjects should not be overlooked.

One of the strongest temptations which presents itself to a retail bookseller is to sell his books at a discount. This temptation should be persistently fought and overcome. I know there is some amount of difficulty to be encountered. The discount system is rife, and because Mr. Smith has recourse to it, Mr. Jones, carrying on business in the same thoroughfare, feels that he is compelled to follow suit or fall out of the race altogether. Much can be done, however, by friendly conference among booksellers in business in any given locality. A little united effort will suffice to extinguish the system.

A few customers may be lost by it—I mean customers who may be in the habit of travelling out of the district, and who may so have the opportunity of buying their books elsewhere—but the advantages which will be reaped will altogether outweigh any little desertions of this sort. Sir Thomas Clark said the other day at Edinburgh that the discount system was doing the retail book trade more real harm than all the public libraries put together. That appears to be the fact, but there is no reason in the world why the injury should continue, if booksellers in specific districts would only adopt a concerted course of action.

The bookseller frequently finds that it pays him to run a circulating library in connection with his shop. He can get "remainders" of well-known novels and other books very cheaply from dealers who lay themselves out specially to provide them. For an outlay of five pounds quite a respectable library can be inaugurated.

The usual plan is to charge a penny for the loan of a book for two days, although, of course, the rates of hire vary, and in some cases the bookseller is fortunate enough to find himself in a position to demand a subscription. It is an advisable thing to hang a neat card in the window drawing attention to the fact of the library's existence. Some booksellers refuse to make this departure on the ground that the library militates against the sale of new books, but so long as the tradesman is careful not to include new books among those which he lets out on hire, the balance of experience will be found to be quite the other way.

It is impossible to conduct any business, and more particularly that of a retail newsagent or bookseller, unless orderly and regular methods of management are adopted. There is no excuse for disorder, because more than one publishing firm produces every variety of book which is necessary to the conducting of the business. If a tradesman will only avail himself of the books which exist, and will only make the proper entries in them, he can ascertain his position probably every week, and certainly every month, finding out without any difficulty what his gross sales have been, what his profits have been, and how far he is either to the bad or to the good.

As an adjunct to the legitimate book and news trade, it has become a very general practice to stock stationery,

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*Signature* ______________________

*Available from 5 p.m. on Friday, December 21st, 1894, until Midnight, Saturday, December 29th, 1894. (See column 3, page 379.)*

**This series of articles, "How to Succeed," will be found invaluable. Let me advise you strongly to obtain the complete set as they are published. You will always be glad to have them by you.**

fancy goods, and cards. In this branch a considerable amount of profit can easily be made, although much naturally depends upon the manner in which stock is bought. The man with fifty pounds available is, of course, enabled, by the fact of his larger capital, to make much more satisfactory purchases—I mean purchases on which much, much more profit will accrue—than the man who goes into the market with only ten pounds to spare.

Discreetly bought, stationery and fancy goods should at least yield a profit of 25 per cent. In some cases 33⅓ per cent. can be obtained without much strain, and in some other instances, where the tradesman is a buyer with judgment, goods will yield a margin of 50 per cent. and more.

There is a special advantage in having a good stock of stationery. It enables a retailer to make a much better display in his window than he would be able to do if he only kept books and periodicals, and, after all, as I have already pointed out, the window display is a highly important matter, as it serves to attract public attention perhaps more than anything else to the tradesman's premises.

Throughout this article I have drawn principally for illustrative purposes on London; but the advice tendered as to the selection of a site for a shop, as to the necessity which exists for ascertaining the tastes of the immediate population, and as to the desirability of catering for these special tastes, applies with equal weight where any provincial centre is concerned. In Newcastle-on-Tyne, for example, the character of an agent's stock will entirely depend upon whether he is carrying on business in Scotswood Road, or the central thoroughfares such as Grey Street and Granger Street, or in a suburb as sedate as Jesmond. In the same way the conditions vary at Birmingham just as much between Corporation Street and Aston as they do between Hackney and Kensington, in London; and it would be folly to attempt to sell the goods which one might readily dispose of on the Granton side of Edinburgh in the Leith end of the same city.

There are various other points to which I might draw attention, but it is probably sufficient to say in conclusion that everything really depends upon the man himself. There are some people who go into the book and news trade who are infinitely better fitted to cut up sausages in a cheap restaurant. Their business gets out of hand, and they lose money. It is not remarkable that they should hunt around for somebody with shoulders broad enough to bear the blame of their failure. Sometimes it is the discount system which stands between them and the competency; sometimes it is a wholesale dealer who is inconveniently prompt in his demands for money; sometimes it is the publisher, who refuses to publish his papers at a lower wholesale price than that which he considers fair to himself. It is never the ill-adapted people themselves who are to blame for their own failures. That is their own view, but it is not the view of any disinterested person who knows them, and is able to take an impartial view of their position.

Any man, as I commenced by suggesting, with brains, activity, and capital, can do well in the book and news trade, if he refuses to entangle himself with extraneous enterprises, and rivets his attention on that trade alone.

[*"How to Succeed as a Dairyman," next week.*]

No. 1. "How to Succeed as a Grocer," by the Editor of the Grocer, appeared in the issue of *P.W.* dated December 1st.

No. 2. "How to Succeed as a Publican," by the Editor of the Licensed Victuallers' Gazette, in the issue dated December 8th.

No. 3. "How to Succeed as a Butcher," by the Editor of the Meat Trades' Journal, in the issue dated December 15th.

No. 4. "How to Succeed as a Tobacconist," by the Editor of the Tobacco Trade Review, in the issue dated December 22nd.

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The Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation, Limited, will pay the Householder of any occupied private Dwelling-house in the United Kingdom (the rateable value of which is over £15 in Urban Districts and over £10 in Rural Districts) the value of any goods (other than coins, money, or securities of any kind) lost through Burglary or Housebreaking, with forcible entry, up to the amount of £20, provided the current and Two previous week's issues of *Pearson's Weekly* with the Coupons signed in ink with the usual signature of the Claimant, be sent with notice of claim, which must be reported to the Corporation, as above, within 48 hours of its occurrence. Provided also that evidence of the regular and previous purchase of the current and two previous weeks' issue of the paper be given; also that satisfactory proof of the Burglary or Housebreaking, and of the loss and value of the goods, and every particular required by the Corporation be furnished to them. No claim is paid where any member of Householder's family, servants, or other inmates of house are in any way concerned. No more than one Coupon can be claimed under by any one Householder. In other respects this Coupon carries the benefits of, and is subject to the conditions of, the ordinary Burglary Policy of the Corporation.

*Signature*____________________

*Dec. 29th, 1894.*

(To be written in ink.)

## SHOULD DOCTORS BE PAID BY THE STATE?

It has long been the desire of those who hold what are called "advanced" opinions in Germany and Switzerland to bring about this change. We have free education, why not free medical attendance? Doctors would become State functionaries, and would receive salaries payable out of the rates, just as the parochial medical officers are at present paid in England.

The movement in favour of free medical attendance is assuming an important character in Switzerland. Mr. Grühlich, the secretary and representative official of the Workmen's Societies, is at the head of it, and he has drawn up a petition for the insertion in Clause 34 of the Swiss Constitution of a sentence which provides for State support of hospitals and doctors, and free attendance and medicine for the sick.

This proposition will shortly be considered by the Federal Council, and may be rejected; but the petition has received such a large number of signatures and such a sympathetic welcome on all sides that the change is certain to take place before long.

Mr. Grühlich says that insurance against accidents and sickness is insufficient and defective; free medical aid is a necessary complement. He is of opinion that it would cost an average of eight francs per head, or a total annual cost for Switzerland of 24,000,000 francs; from this must be deducted about 8,000,000 francs, the amount already contributed by the cantons to the maintenance of hospitals, leaving 16,000,000 francs. This amount could be raised by a tobacco monopoly, he says.

The country would be divided into medical districts, each under the care of a doctor elected by the people for a term of years; the State would pay the salaries, apportioning to each district its fair share of the cost.

The doctors' salaries would vary from 4,000 to 8,000 francs (£160 to £320) per annum, according to circumstances.

The public health would gain considerably, because it would be much to the interest of medical men with a *fixed* salary to *prevent* disease, rather than have the trouble of curing it. Rich people could have their own doctors if they chose. Poor people would not make futile attempts to cure themselves because they could not pay the doctor, and disease would therefore have less chance of spreading.

Of course, there are objections to the scheme. Assuming that the estimate of cost is correct—which is disputed by the Swiss physicians—sick people will be obliged to go to a certain doctor, whether they have confidence in him or not; that is a serious matter, because we know what an important part the mind plays in connection with the cure of bodily ailments.

The doctor, harassed by the necessity of keeping on good terms with his electors, will find himself forced to live in the most thickly populated portion of his district, in order to satisfy the majority, and will consequently be obliged at times to make unnecessarily long journeys. How is he to combat the exaggerated ideas of some patients, who think that the doctor should come at any hour their disordered imagination makes them believe that they require his services?

There are unreasonable people who will want champagne or similar luxuries, and if the medical man refuses he will lose votes at the next election. And suppose that a sudden emergency arises just within another district, and our doctor is called because he happens to be nearer? Is he to refuse to go outside his district?

Finally the creation of official medical men will certainly bring about a decrease in scientific value. There will not be that desire to inquire further into the cause of disease; there will be nothing to be gained by it; doctors will become to a certain extent indifferent, and the national health, instead of gaining, will lose by the adoption of the proposal about to be submitted to the Federal Council. Such is the opinion of a prominent physician.

Nevertheless, Mr. Grühlich's initiative deserves very careful consideration, for unquestionably there is a good deal to be said in favour of free medical aid. In the meantime it is interesting to note that the municipality of the Russian town of Volsk is discussing a proposal to grant a "concession" to a chemist, whereby, for a fixed sum, he will be bound to prepare 6,000 prescriptions, and for everyone above that number he will receive only twopence.

◆

A sharp boy said to a gentleman of very large understandings that he would be a very nice man if so much of his legs hadn't been turned up to make feet of.

◆

Wife (to husband): "There were two hats that I liked, one for thirteen shillings and the other for eighteen shillings."

Husband: "Which did you finally decide upon?"

Wife: "The eighteen shilling one. I'm a little superstitious about the number thirteen."

◆

Brother Claude: "Waiting to see Ethel?"

Young Somerby: "Yes; I sent up my card some time ago."

"Well, she isn't in."

"Why am I kept waiting, then?"

"I heard mamma say she expected the new minister every minute, and you look so well with the rest of the things in the parlour she wanted to keep you."

## A DECISIVE STEP.

His chum came in and found him slipping a lock of hair into an envelope—not furtively or surreptitiously, but just placing it under cover in a calm, business-like way.

"Hello!" says the visitor, "what's up?"

"Nothing," he answered; "I'm only sending back Miss Hamilton-Highlow's hair, that's all."

"Engagement off again?"

"Yes."

"How many times does this make?"

"Five. It's final this time, though, one way or the other."

"Does she say so?"

"Oh, she always says it's final. *I'm* setting things just now. It's off for ever or cards out soon!"

"How do you do it?"

"Little scheme of my own. You know the colour of her hair, don't you? Warm brown, with a little raw umber in it. Well, this sample of hair I'm doing up is red—good, regular, standard red. I tell you we're going to get down to genuine emotion this time. She'll know whether she loves me or not; and, if she does, she'll walk me in by the ear."

## VERY STRANGE DISHES.

It is prejudice rather than reason which leads to the rejection as food of many animals, which scientific men and travellers declare to be wholesome as well as edible. In various parts of the world there are societies the object of whose organisation is to add to the food supply by demonstrating the palatability of hitherto unused articles. They have tried crocodile steaks, and say that they are excellent, the tail of the reptile being the most dainty part, and the flavour resembling that of salmon. We all know scrambled eggs to be a satisfying dish when they come from the chicken-coop; but it is doubtful if many would care for them if they were python's eggs.

A German *savant* recently invited several guests to eat a dish of the latter, which were fried in melted butter, and tasted, it is said, like mashed pototoes mixed with rice.

The late Frank Buckland was zealous in his gastronomic researches. Among the dishes which he "invented" was stewed boa-constrictor, which resembled veal, and he has given us a story of a little girl in his house who ate, without the least injury, several snakes' eggs, under the impression that they were sugar-plums.

A German society has tried with satisfaction a dish made of frogs' spawn, and the Reverend J. G. Wood, the popular author, avowed that there were few greater delicacies than the common rat, when it was grain-fed and cooked in the form of a pie.

Experiments have also been made with the octopus, which is said to be highly savoury when seasoned with garlic, cloves, lime-juice and olive-oil; with sharks' meat, which furnishes excellent cutlets when it is young and tender; and with roast crane, stuffed with chestnuts and prunes.

The latter might be palatable, but who among us will ever be converted to an appetite for either corn-fed rats, or scrambled pythons' eggs?

◆

There is nothing more truly insinuating and deferential than the waggle of a little dog's tail in the presence of a big dog with a bone.

◆

An obituary, very eulogistic of a lady, says:

"She was married twenty-four years, and in all that time never once banged the door."

## RESULT OF THE "CAT" COMPETITION.

Although perfectly satisfactory in point of numbers, the paragraphs of not more than twenty-four words sent in for this competition proved somewhat monotonous reading. Penknives have been forwarded to the following persons:—

Mrs. Powell, 26, Juxon Street, Oxford; Miss J. Kyree, Pratshayes, Exmouth, Devon; T. Martin, 57, Main Street, Tipperary; J. Boulding, 43, Louth Road, Camberwell, S.E.; S. J. Herrett, 8, Falcon Road, Clapham; David Clarke, 28, Catherine Street, Anderston, Glasgow; S. J. Clifton, Priory Grove, Tonbridge, Kent; G. P. Dornan, Park View, Heapey, near Chorley, Lancs.; William Cunliffe, 23, Harcourt Road, Brockley, S.E.; S. Marrs, Walnut Tree Cottage, Napier Road, New Brompton, Chatham; W. Lloyd, 82, High Street, Littlehampton, Sussex; A. S. Vodden, 7, Armada Terrace, Cattedown Road, Plymouth; D. S. Clouston, c.o. A. Clouston, Stromness, Orkney, N.B.; C. H. Whitlock, 43, Church Road, Upper Norwood; J. Proctor, 7, Thomaston Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool; C. J. W. Hanson, 12, Great Ormond Street, W.C.; T. B. Williamson, 82, Ginns, Whitehaven, Cumberland; K. Harper, 1, South Grove, Plymouth Grove, Manchester; A. H. Moore, 41, North Street, Chichester; W. C. Saville, 9, Salisbury Road, Chingford, Essex; F. J. Allen, 2, Brunswick Place, Leith Walk, Edinburgh; H. Coke, 18, Cecil Street, Lenton, Nottingham; G. Robinson, Floss Hall, near Durham; Leon Parsard, "Mondesir" Willaston, near Chester; A. MacLeod, 93, Harmony Road, Govan; Clive Parsons, Chestnut Cottage, Latchett Road, South Woodford, Essex; W. George, Frongoch, Bala, N. Wales; J. G. Lloyd, 3, Clarence Buildings, Ventnor, I. of W.; L. Caselton, Holly House, Erith; V. Millson, 40, Cobridge Street, Bootle; J. M. Braidwood, 7, Sciennes, Edinburgh; G. W. Cobbe, 63, Darville Road, Brook Road, Stoke Newington, N.E.; J. Hutton, 35, Clifton Place, Shipley, Yorkshire; W. H. Evans, The Briars, Gorringe Road, Eastbourne; M. Hutter, 97, Agincourt Road, Landport, Portsmouth; G. W. Baldry, 38, Constance Road, East Dulwich, S.E.; B. Ellen, 8, Barnstaple Street, Bideford; Mrs. W. Prewett, Kilmeston, Alresford, Hants; F. Vanse, 50, Spring Street, Spring Bank, Hull; R. P. Willock, Hope Vicarage, Eccles, Manchester; H. Huntingford, 6, Park Lane, Teddington, Middlesex; F. Preston, 17, Hillside Road, Stamford Hill; Peter Tulloch, 14, Caledonian Road, Perth, N.B.; J. Moore, Canon Street, Shrewsbury; W. Storey, 8, Parade, Birmingham; T. Garland, New Mill Villa, Pool Street, Bodmin, Cornwall; Frank Stead, 44, Orchard Street, Bradford, Yorks; J. Elder, 115, George Street, Edinburgh; G. C. Wells, 16, Haslemere Road, Peckham, S.E.; H. M. Fletcher, 4, Worcester Terrace, Boundary Road, Ramsgate.

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*Now First Published.*]

# HEART OF THE WORLD.*

### By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

*Author of "She," "King Solomon's Mines," "Cleopatra," "The People of the Mist," &c., &c.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY E. S. HOPE.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE MARRIAGE OF MAYA.

PRESENTLY the door opened and the Señor was brought into the Sanctuary, as he thought to his death, for I saw that his teeth were set and that his hand was clenched as though to defend himself. But as he came the most of the Council rose and bowed to him, crying:

"Hail to you! Son of the Sea, Favoured of Heaven, Father foreordained of the Deliverer to come!"

Then he knew that the plot had succeeded and uttered a great sigh of relief.

"Hearken, white lord," said Mattai, for Tikal sat still and scowled on him in silence; "the gods have spoken by their oracle. As Zibalbay thought, so it is, and your feet have been led for a purpose to the gates of the City of the Heart. Listen to the words of the gods:—" and taking the tablet he read to him the false prophecy. "Now choose, white man. Will you take the Lady Maya to wife, or will you be put to death in that, having wandered to the City of the Heart, you refuse to obey the command of its gods?"

Now the Señor thought and answered:

"The man would be foolish who hesitated between death and so fair and sweet a bride. Still, this is a matter that I cannot decide alone. What says the Lady Maya?"

"She says," answered Maya, "that although this is a marriage for which she did not look, and it is a new thing that a daughter of the Heart should take a stranger of less ancient blood to husband, the will of Heaven is her will, and the lord that Heaven chooses for her shall be her lord," and she stretched out her hand to the Señor.

He took it, and, bending down, kissed her fingers, saying: "May I be worthy of your choice, lady."

Now I thought that the ceremonies were finished, and was glad, for I grew weary of assisting at this farce, but the old priest, Zibalbay's foster-brother, rose and said:

"One thing more must be done, brethren, before we leave this Sanctuary, and it is to swear in these strangers as members of the Council. They have wandered here from far, and here with us they must live and die, seeing that both of them know our secrets, and one of them is pre-destined to become the father of that great lord to whose arising we have looked for many generations, and therefore until the child is born he must be watched and guarded as priests watch a sacred fire."

"Ay! it is well thought of. Let them be sworn, and remember that to break the oath is death," was the answer.

Then Mattai rose, as Keeper of the Sanctuary, and said:

"You, white man, Son of the Sea, and you Ignatio, the Wanderer, a Lord of the Heart, do swear upon the holy symbol of the Heart, the oath to break which is to die horribly in this world and to be lost everlastingly in the worlds that are to be. You swear, setting in pledge your souls and bodies for the fulfilment of the oath, that neither by word nor sign nor deed will you reveal aught of the mysteries or the councils of this Brotherhood, whereof you will be the faithful servant till your deaths, holding it supreme above every power upon earth. You swear that you will not possess yourselves of the treasures of the City of the Heart, nor without the consent of this high Brotherhood attempt to leave its gates or to bring any stranger within its walls. These things you swear with your hands upon the altar, setting in pledge your souls and bodies for the fulfilment of the oath."

Other clauses there were which I have forgotten, but this was the substance of the vow that was dictated to us. We looked at each other helplessly, and then, there being no escape, we swore, kneeling before the altar, with our hands resting upon it. As the solemn words of confirmation passed our lips, we heard a sound of the movement of heavy stones behind us.

"Arise now," said the old priest, "turn and look upon that which lies behind you."

We obeyed, and the next instant shrank back against the altar in alarm, for within six feet of us a massive stone in the floor had been lifted revealing the mouth of a well, from the deep recesses of which came the sound of rushing waters.

"Behold, brethren," he went on, "and learn that should the oath which you have sworn be broken in a single letter after what fashion you must suffer for your sins. Into that pit you shall be cast that the water may choke your breath, and the demons of the under world may prey upon your souls through all eternity. Have you seen? And do you understand?"

"We have seen, and we understand," we answered.

"Then let the mouth of the pit be sealed again, and pray you in your hearts that it may never be opened to receive the living body of you or of any of us. Son of the Sea, and you, Ignatio the Wanderer, the oaths have been sworn, and the ceremony is finished. Henceforth till your deaths you are of our number, sharers in our rights and privileges, and to you will be assigned houses and revenues fitted to your station. Go forth, brethren, that you may refresh yourselves, and prepare to meet the people upon the summit of the pyramid at dawn; that is, within an hour. Lead them away with you, my Lord Mattai."

So we went, and accompanied by Maya, Mattai, and the escort of priests, passed through the halls and passages out into the courtyard of the temple, and thence to apartments in the palace, where we refreshed ourselves with food, for we were weary.

The trick had succeeded, the ordeal was past, and for the present at least we were no longer in danger of our lives; more, the power of Mattai was confirmed, and his daughter was assured in her position as the wife of Tikal, and the Señor and the Lady Maya were about to attain the fulness of their desire, and to be declared one in the presence of the people. Yet, never did I partake of a sadder meal, or behold faces more oppressed by care and the fear of the future, for though nothing was said, in our hearts each of us knew that we had become parties to a crime, and that, sooner or later, in this way or in that, our evil-doing would find us out.

Putting this matter aside, I myself had good reason to mourn, seeing that whatever the other had gained I had won nothing, and found myself bound by a solemn oath not even to attempt to leave this city whither I had journeyed with such high hope. Well, the thing was done, and it was useless to regret it or to think of the future, so turning to Mattai, I asked him what was to happen on the pyramid.

"There will be a great gathering of the people," he answered, "as is customary at dawn after the night of the Rising of Waters, and there they will be told all that has happened in the Sanctuary, and then, if it is their will, Tikal will be confirmed as *Cacique* according to the bargain, and either to-day or to-morrow the white man here will become the husband of the Lady Maya, in order," he added with a sneer, "that of their union may be born the Deliverer who is to be. Now, if you are ready, it is time for us to go, for the multitude is gathered, and an escort waits us without."

Leaving the palace we placed ourselves in the centre of a party of nobles and guards who were in attendance, and marched across the courtyard and up the steps of the pyramid. The night was growing grey with the breaking of the dawn and in the pearly light, through which the stars shone faintly, we perceived that bands of priests and nobles wrapped in their broidered *serapes*, for the morning air was chilly, stood in their appointed places round the altar. In front of them were ranged the dense masses of the people, drawn here to make their prayers upon this feast day, and also by desire to learn the truth as to the death of Zibalbay, the fate of the strangers who had accompanied him from the unknown lands, the decision of the Council as to the successor to the place and power of *Cacique*, and lastly whether or no the oracle of the god had spoken to his priests upon this or any other matter when the lost talisman was set in its place in the Sanctuary.

On reaching the altar, seats were given to us among the nobles of the Heart, those of Maya and the Señor being placed in such fashion that they would be visible to the whole multitude.

Then followed a silence, till at length a priest, who was stationed upon the roof of the watch-house, blew a silver trumpet and proclaimed that the dawn was broken, whereon bands of singers who were in readiness began to chant a very beautiful hymn of which the refrain was caught up by the audience. As they sang a beam from the rising sun struck upon the fire that burned above the altar and again the trumpet sounded. Then, in the silence that followed, the priest who stood by the fire clothed in white robes, prayed in a loud voice, saying:

"O god, our god, let our sins die with the dying year. O god, our god, strengthen us with thy strength, comfort us with thy comfort during the day that is to be. O god, our god, have pity upon us, lift us from the darkness of the past and give us light in the coming time. Hear us, Heart of Heaven, hear us!"

He ceased, and from the surrounding gloom many voices made response, saying: "Hear us, Heart of Heaven, hear us!"

Then for a space the old priest stood still, the fire-light flickering on his tall form and rapt countenance as he gazed towards the east. Greyer and greyer grew the gloom till of a sudden a ray from the unrisen sun shot through the shadows like a spear and fell athwart the summit of the pyramid, paling the holy fire that seemed to shrink before it. At the coming of the sunbeam the multitude of worshippers, men and women together, rose from the marble pavement whereon they had been kneeling in prayer, and casting off the dark cloaks which covered their white robes, turned, extending their arms towards the east, and cried with one accord:

"Hail to thee, O Sun! bringer of all good things. Hail to thee, new-born child of god!"

Now the light grew fast and soon the city appeared, rising white and beautiful from its veil of mist, and as the glory of the daylight fell upon it other priests who stood by the altar uttered prayers appointed to be offered upon this day of the beginning of the Rising of Waters. To the People of the Heart the occasion was a great one, seeing that but little rain falls in their country, and thus they depended for a bountiful harvest upon the inundation of the island and of the low shores that lay around the lake by its waters swollen with the melted snow of the great mountains on the mainland. When the waters retreated, then they planted their grain in rich land made fertile without labour to themselves by the mud, whence before the lake rose again they gathered their corn and other crops.

When they had ended their praying, and gifts of fresh flowers had been laid upon the altar by beautiful children chosen for that purpose, Tikal blessed the multitude as high priest and the simple ceremony came to an end.

Then Mattai rose to speak, telling the people all things that had happened, or so much of them as it was expedient that they should know. He told them of the death of Zibalbay, of the setting of the lost talisman in the symbol, and of the writing that was found therein, which he read aloud to them amidst a dead silence. Then he told them how the Lady Maya and the Señor had consented to be married in obedience to the voice of the oracle; and lastly, how she, the Lady Maya, had desired that her cousin Tikal should continue to be *Cacique* of the City of the Heart, that she might have more leisure to attend upon her heaven-sent husband, and to be at rest until that child was become a man, whose wisdom and power should make them even greater than their forefathers had been.

When he had finished there was much applause and other expressions of joy, and a spokesman from among the people asked when the marriage of the white man, Son of the Sea, to the Lady Maya would take place.

This question she answered in person, saying modestly that it was her lord's will that it should take place that very night in the banqueting hall of the palace, and that a great feast should be celebrated in honour of it.

After this the talking came to an end, Tikal having said no word good or bad beyond such as the duties of his office required, and according to the custom of the country many people, noble and simple, came forward to congratulate her who was about to be made a bride. Weary of watching them and of hearing their pretty speeches, I took advantage of the escort of a friendly noble and went to see the ceremony of the closing of the flood-gate, a huge block of marble that slid down a groove into a niche prepared to receive it, where it was fastened with great bars of copper and sealed by certain officers, although, as I was told, the rising water would not reach it for another eight or ten days. Even though the flood should prove to be a low one, it was death to break those seals for a space of four full months, and during all this time any who would leave the city must do so by means of ladders reaching from the wall to little wooden jetties, where boats were moored. Afterwards we walked round the walls and through some of the main streets, and I marvelled at the greatness of this half-deserted place, for the most of it was in ruins, and at the many strange sights that I saw in it. Indeed, I think that Mexico, in the time of Montezuma, my forefather, was not more powerful or populous than this town must have been in the days of its prosperity.

About midday I returned to the apartments that had been assigned to me in the palace, and hearing that the Señor was still in attendance upon the Lady Maya, I ate my dinner alone with such appetite as I could find, and lay down to sleep awhile.

I was awakened from my rest by the Señor, who arrived, looking merry as he used to be before ever Molas came to lead us to the old Indian doctor and his daughter, and full of talk about the preparations for his wedding that night. I listened to all he had to say and strove earnestly to fall into his mood, but, as I suppose, without effect, for in the end he fell into mine, which was but a sad one, and began to talk regretfully of the past and doubtfully of the future. Now I did my best to cheer him, but with little avail, for he shook his head and said:

"Indian as she is, I love Maya dearly, and no other woman has been or can be so much to me, and yet I am afraid, Ignatio, for this marriage is ill-omened, and I pray that what was begun in trickery may not end in desolation. Also the future is black both for you and for me. You came here for a certain purpose and will desire to leave again to follow your purpose; nor, although I take this lady to wife, do I wish to spend my days in the City of the Heart. And yet it would seem that, unless we can escape, this is what we must do."

"Let us hope that we shall be able to escape," I answered.

"I doubt it," he said, "for already I have discovered that though we be treated with all honour, yet we shall be closely watched, or, at least, I shall, for certain reasons. Still, come what may, I trust that this marriage will make no breach in our friendship, Ignatio."

"I do not know, Señor, though I think that for weeks its shadow has lain between us, and I fear lest that shadow should deepen. Also it has been fated that women and their loves should come between me, my ambitions, and my friends. From the moment that my eyes fell upon the Lady Maya bound to the altar in the chapel of the *hacienda*, I felt that her great beauty would bring trouble upon us, and it would seem that my heart did not lie to me. Now, under her guidance we have entered upon a dark and doubtful path, whereof no man can see the end."

"Yes," he answered, "but we took that path in order to save our lives."

"She took it, not to save her life, on which I think she sets little store, but to win a husband whom she desires. For my part I hold that it would have been better for us to die, if Heaven so willed it, than to live on with hearts fouled by deceit, seeing that in the end die we must, but no years of added life can wear away that stain. Well, this must seem sad talk to the ears of a bridegroom. Forget it, friend, and rest awhile that you may do credit to the marriage feast."

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**There's a Christmas Box which you will give without grudging this year. It's the newsboy's, and the reason will be your profound contentment with this, our Special Double Number.**

Without answering, the Señor lay down upon the bed, where he remained, whether sleeping or awake I do not know, till the hour of sunset, when he was aroused by the arrival of several lords and attendants who came to lead him to the bath. On his return other messengers entered bearing magnificent robes and jewels, the gift of the Lady Maya, to be worn by him and by me at the ceremony. Then barbers having trimmed and scented his fair hair and beard according to the fashion of this people, he was decked out like a victim for the sacrifice.

So soon as all was prepared the doors were flung wide and six officers of the palace came through them bearing wands of office in their hands, accompanied by a troop of singing girls chosen for their loveliness, which, to speak truth, was not small. In the midst of these officers and ladies the Señor was placed and followed by myself, who walked behind with a heavy heart, he set out for the banqueting hall.

As we reached it the doors were thrown open and the singers set up a love song, pretty enough, but so foolish that I have forgotten it. We passed the threshold and found that the great hall was crowded with guests arrayed in their most brilliant attire, whereon the lamplight shone bravely. Through this company we walked till we reached an open space at the far end of the hall, around which in a semicircle sat the members of the Council of the Heart, Tikal and his wife being placed in the centre of them, having Mattai on their right, and on their left that old priest Dimas, the foster brother of Zibalbay, who had administered the oath to us.

As we advanced, with one exception all the Council rose and bowed to the Señor. That exception was Tikal, who stared straight before him and did not move. Scarcely had they resumed their seats when the sound of singing was heard again mingled with that of music, and far away at the foot of the long hall appeared a band of musicians playing upon pipes of reeds, clad in the royal livery of green, and crowned with oak-leaves. After the musicians marched, or rather danced, a number of young girls robed in white only, and carrying white lilies in their hands, which they threw upon the floor to be trodden by the feet of the bride.

Next came Maya herself, a sight of beauty such as stirred even my cold heart, and caused me to think more gently of the Señor, who had become party to a trick to win her. She also was arrayed in white, embroidered with gold, and having the symbol of the Heart blazoned on her breast; about her waist and neck were a girdle and collar of priceless emeralds; on her head was set a tiara of perfect pearls taken in past ages from the shell fish of the lake, and round her wrists and ankles were bangles of dead gold.

Her waving hair hung loose almost to her sandalled feet, and in her hand, as token of her rank, she bore a little golden sceptre, having at one end a great pearl, and at the other a heart-shaped emerald. On she came, or rather floated, her delicate head held high, and so strange and beautiful was the aspect of her face that for my part from the instant that I beheld it till she stood before me by the bridegroom, I seemed to see naught else. It was very pale and somewhat set; indeed, at that moment Maya looked more like a white woman than one of Indian blood, and her curved lips were parted as though they waited for some forgotten words to pass them.

Her deep blue eyes also were set wide, and beneath the shadow of their lashes seemed full of mystery and wonder, like the eyes of one who walks in her sleep, and beholds things invisible to the waking sight. Presently they fell upon the eyes of the Señor, and of a sudden grew human, while the red blood mantled on her breast and arms and brow.

Then for me the spell was broken, and I glanced at Tikal and saw that on his face was that same look with which he had greeted Maya when on the night of his own wedding-feast he beheld her whom he believed to be dead, standing before him clothed in life and beauty. Eagerly, despairingly, he watched her, and I noted that tears stood in his angry eyes, and that a gust of jealous rage shook him from head to foot when he saw her flush with joy at the sight of his white rival.

From Tikal my glance travelled to the dark beauty at his side, Nahua, his wife, and I became aware that in this instant she grew certain of what perhaps before she only guessed, that in his heart her husband loathed her, as with all his soul and strength he loved the affianced of his youth who stood before him the bride of another man.

Doubt, fear, rage looked out in turn from her omnious eyes as the knowledge went home, to be succeeded by a possessing misery, the misery of one who knows that all which makes life good to her is for ever lost. Then pressing her hands to her heart for a moment, she turned aside to hide her shame and wretchedness, and when she looked up again her face was calm as the face of a statue, but on it was frozen a mask of unchanging hate, hate of the woman who had robbed her.

Now the bridegroom and the bride stood together in the open space surrounded by the half circle of the Council of the Heart, among whom I was given a seat, while behind them were arranged the musicians and singing girls, and behind these again pressed the glittering audience of marriage guests. When all were in their places a herald rose and cried out the names and titles of the pair, reciting briefly that they were to be wed by the direct command of the guardian god of the city by the wish of the Council of the Heart, and because of the love that they bore one another.

Next, reading from a written roll, he published the text of the agreement whereby Maya renounced her right as ruler in favour of her cousin Tikal, and I noticed that this agreement was received by the company in cold silence and with some few expressions of disapproval.

Lastly, from another roll he read a list of the honours, offices, wealth, houses, and servants which were thereby assigned to the Lady Maya and her consort, and also to myself their friend, for the maintenance of their rank and dignity and of my comfort.

Having finished his task, he asked the Señor and Maya whether they had heard all that he had read by command of the Council, and, if so, whether they approved thereof. They bowed their heads in assent, whereupon the herald turned and addressing Tikal by all his titles, called upon him in virtue of his priestly office and of his position as chief of the state, to make these two one in the face of the people according to the ancient custom of the land.

Tikal heard him and rose from his seat as though to commence the service, then sank down again, saying:

"Seek some other priest, herald, for this I will not do."

*(To be continued next week.)*

## ROYAL PAGES.

It is only at the Imperial and Royal courts of Europe that "the pretty page with the dimpled chin," so sweetly sung by the poet, and who constituted one of the most picturesque and romantic features of mediæval times, still survives.

Royal and Imperial pages range in age from twelve to sixteen years. They are appointed by the sovereign, enjoy pay, prerogatives and perquisites, much as do the grown-up attendants on Royalty, and are ascribed certain definite duties.

Gentle birth is the first qualification for the post of Royal page. At the courts of Vienna and Munich, an ancestry of no less than sixteen generations free from any plebeian strain on either father's or mother's side is required in the candidates. In Britain and Russia so long a nobility is not demanded. The pages of honour in the court of Queen Victoria are generally the sons of distinguished officers of the army, or of high dignitaries of the Royal household.

These boys receive £100 a year each, and when they have served a period of five years, each is presented with a commission in the Guards. On State occasions they wear gorgeous uniforms of blue and silver. Besides serving on such occasions, they have to devote a certain number of weeks every year to more private service at Windsor or at Osborne. One of their chief functions is to bear the Queen's train when she holds a meeting of the Privy Council. The Queen is rigid in her etiquette, and never presides at Councils without wearing her long black silk Court train.

At the court of Berlin the pages figure at all State ceremonies, clad, like those of England, in blue and silver, and at the court banquets they stand behind the chairs of the Royal and Imperial personages. These personages, on rising from the table, sometimes address a few kindly words to the boys, and present them with sweetmeats from the epergnes. These pages are chosen only from among the best-looking boys of the School of Cadets, nearly all the members of which are of noble birth.

At the court of St. Petersburg the corps of pages is a sort of Imperial school where a number of lads, sons of noblemen and State dignitaries, both civil and military, are educated at the Tsar's expense and under his supervision. On attaining their eighteenth year they usually obtain commissions as officers of the regiment of Chevalier Guards.

◆

TO HIM THAT HATH.—"Is it true, old man, that you are going to marry Miss B—— and her two millions?"

"Yes; to-morrow."

"Ah! Here is the £5 I owe you."

◆

ABLE EDITOR: "I fear our side has lost. Write an editorial charging the opposition with the most flagrant and shameless frauds on the ballot box."

Assistant: "I fancy you have not seen the latest despatches."

"What do they say?"

"They indicate that our side has won."

"Hello! Well, write an editorial congratulating the people that under the present law election frauds are impossible."

## THE SKATERS' PARADISE.

HOLLAND is the paradise of skaters. In that odd country, "where up trains run on the down line, and the cows are tied to the ceiling by their tails," a great many things go by contraries, and skating is one of them. The weary waiting for a black frost to solidify the waters of deep lakes and treacherous ponds, which in England tantalises the possessor of "Acmes," prevents his sleeping o' nights, and drives skate-makers to suicide, is to the Dutchman an unknown mortification.

Skating is, indeed, almost the only violent exercise for which the Dutchman has any liking; and in the winter he holds high carnival on the ice. The number of skating clubs between Northern Brabant and Groningen is infinite; but it is the provinces north of the Zuyder Zee—Friesland and Groningen—that the best skaters are to be found. These are the classical training grounds of the Dutch ice artists.

When there is likelihood of a frost, the only thing necessary to secure a good "surface" is to open the sluices used for irrigation, and inundate the great flat meadows. The operation is superintended by representatives of the skating clubs in the neighbourhood. A place of some six or eight thousand feet in circumference is staked out around a given point, the water is allowed to flow in until it is of a convenient depth, and the sluices are then closed. Directly the ice is sufficiently thick a number of workmen are told off to keep it clear of snow, should any fall, and to sweep it carefully at frequent intervals.

Then begin a succession of skating competitions. These competitions are got up by the local skating club; sometimes they are international, but clubs and individuals are constantly competing among themselves. The prizes offered on these occasions are often of a considerable money value, and the funds for providing them are supplied by the small sum charged for admission to the skating-ground and the entrance fees paid by the competitors. All the world skates when there is ice, for skating is a universal accomplishment among all classes; and the buxom—almost too buxom—Dutch ladies glide along with an ease and grace which come as a surprise to the foreigner, who has remarked the awkwardness of their carriage in the streets.

The best skaters, and those who carry off the largest number of prizes, are usually crack members of crack clubs. As soon as the competitions and the value of the prizes are announced, the clubs scrutinise the lists, and decide what prizes their members shall compete for. Those who are to represent the club are, of course, chosen for their skill. Each society is, therefore, certain of being represented by its best men.

As all the expenses of the representative to, from, and during a competition are paid by the club, the rank and file of the members have an inducement to excel likewise; for it is possible in this way to obtain a good many pleasant holidays in the course of a winter without spending anything. The money won becomes the property of the club, and at the end of the season is spent in some form of entertainment, a small balance only being carried over to the following winter.

The competitions are usually of three classes—swiftness, elegance, and the clearing of obstacles. The latter is amazingly difficult, even to experts; yet there are in Holland a large number of skaters who can with ease and grace clear, in full career, the straw-covered spaces intended to represent natural obstacles upon the ice.

It may be interesting to add that the best Dutch skaters do not fix their skates solidly to their boots. They fasten them but slightly, with the point inclined inwards, a method of arrangement which, it is said, permits of much straighter and swifter progression than that generally in use in England.

A Dutch skating-ground during the fashionable hours is a very animated and picturesque scene, full of brilliant spots of colour. It is the height of fashion for ladies to appear upon the ice with posies or bouquets of natural flowers, generally the offerings of male friends. The Dutch florists regard skating as an even more sacred institution than schnapps.

◆

WHICH WAS THE BRUTE?—As good an example of human injustice as could easily be found was revealed in a remark made by a man who was recently run over in the street by a cabman.

The injured man was asked if he knew the cabman's number, and answered:

"No, I couldn't see; but I got even with the brute. Just as he was driving away I hit his horse a fearful blow with my stick, and I shouldn't wonder if it would lame him."

◆

AT THE CLOSE OF DAY.—Little Ethel: "Read me some of that pretty story, won't you, mamma?"

Mamma: "Very well. Where were we? Oh! here is the place: 'When the half-frozen travellers had reached the shore they climbed up the bank, and, skirting the woods——'"

Little Ethel: "What did they do that for, mamma?"

Mamma: "Why, it was winter, you know, dear, and the wind blew fiercely, so they——"

Little Ethel: "Oh, I know. The limbs of the poor little trees were bare, so the travellers skirted them. Wasn't it nice of the kind travellers?"

**It may interest you to know that "Heart of the World" will be followed by a romance by George Griffith which, though far different from the "Angel" and the "Syren," will be even more marvellous, and, if possible, more enthralling.**

# FICTION.

## A DUET.

**Baritone:** "Now we're engaged, if you have any brothers—
By that, I mean the men whom you've refused—
They must be on a footing with the others;
I won't have any mild endearments used—
Now we're engaged."

**Soprano:** "If you had any sister and I knew it—
I mean a girl who said she'd be your sister—
She should be taught the way how not to do it,
And comprehend that you can quite resist her—
Now we're engaged."

**Baritone:** "As if I wished to look at other beauties
Now you are mine."
**Soprano:** "As though I cared for men
Compared to you! I hope I know my duties.
Of course we used to flirt, but that was *then*—
Now we're engaged."

**Baritone:** "Who was the man with top-coat lined with sable?"
**Soprano:** "Who was the girl with bonnet trimmed with pink?"
**Baritone:** "I would inform you, but I'm unable."
**Soprano:** "I'd tell his name—but really I can't think—
Now we're engaged."

**Baritone:** "Now, no more lingering in conservatories,
Under dim coloured lights and tropic bowers."
**Soprano:** "Now, no more reading sentimental stories
To girls, and giving them bonbons and flowers—
Now we're engaged."

**Baritone:** "I shall not tolerate the least flirtation;
I warn you fairly——"
**Soprano:** "Please don't be enraged;
But—might we sometimes take a brief vacation,
Now we're engaged?"

◆

THE SAD FATE OF THE REV. CHARLES SIMPKINS.—Man is the only animal that wears short socks.

The great trouble with the short sock is that it will not keep its place. There being nothing whatever to hold it in position, the force of gravitation necessarily drags it down about the ankle. This causes an amount of misery which is appalling, and more than counterbalances the sum of the suffering undergone by the entire female sex, from whatever causes.

There is no man who can feel any confidence in his socks. Whether he is walking or sitting, he knows that his socks are slowly but surely slipping down. Garters being out of the question, since the shortness of the sock does not permit a garter to be placed in a position where it will not slip, there is absolutely no remedy for what we may fairly call the giant evil of the age.

Pins and paste have both been tried by desperate men, but they have proved useless, and in many cases have merely added to the misery of the user. In these circumstances there is nothing left for man to do except to bear the sock in silence or to boldly cast it aside and adopt the full-grown stocking.

The latter alternative was recently chosen by that eloquent, but unfortunate, clergyman, the Rev. Charles Simpkins, of Slopton. Previous to the catastrophe which overtook him, the church did not possess a more popular or prominent young clergyman.

As he was unmarried, and only twenty-seven years of age, it is needless to say that he was almost worshipped by the unmarried ladies of the parish, and he received more annual slippers and book-marks than any other clergyman in the United Kingdom.

Neatness was one of the characteristics of Mr. Simpkins, and there are probably few men who have suffered more keenly than he suffered from short socks. When walking through the village he was in continual dread lest his socks should descend into public view, and even when preaching his most eloquent sermons the perspiration would gather on his brow as he felt that one of his socks was gradually slipping down.

This wore upon him to that extent that his massive intellect began to totter, and one Sunday morning he deliberately paused after remarking "Here endeth," and stooped down to repair damages.

That night he resolved that vigorous measures should be taken without further delay, and he accordingly wrote a confidential letter to his sister's husband, who resided in Manchester, and inclosed the necessary measurements.

Shortly afterwards he received, ostensibly from the husband, but really from his affectionate sister, a dozen pairs of Balbriggan hose, with two scarlet elastics of precisely the right size, and of three-quarters of an inch in width, together with full instructions for the wearing of the same.

As soon as Mr. Simkins had learned by repeated experiments how to wear the scarlet appliances, his spirits began to rise. He was no longer a prey to doubt and despair. His stockings firmly kept their place, and he felt that he could even attend a picnic and climb over a stile in public without fear of the consequences. Accordingly, for the first time during his incumbency of the parish of Slopton, he consented to attend the annual Sunday-school picnic, and thereby filled with unutterable delight the souls of all the unmarried teachers.

Mr. Simpkins, being free from care, entered into all the sports of the picnic with great zeal, and the children, charmed by his affability, insisted that he, together with all the teachers, should take part in a game of blind man's buff. The request was acceded to, and the usual running, laughing, and shrieking followed.

It was while Mr. Simpkins was fleeing in company with six excited teachers from the pursuit of a blind-folded small boy, that he suddenly noticed that one of his elastics had become unclasped, and had fallen to the ground. At the same moment it was perceived by one of the prettiest of the teachers, who made a frantic effort to seize it, but was anticipated by the unhappy clergyman.

It was bad enough for him to know that the teacher had discovered his misfortune, but what was his horror and amazement, when, with every appearance of anger, she demanded that he should hand her "that" instantly. He was so astonished at her evident desire to make sport of him that he did not deign to answer her, but put the disputed article in his pocket and walked away.

Whereupon the teacher burst into tears, and informed her confidential friends that Mr. Simpkins had had the inconceivable audacity to steal one of her—in fact, her private property.

The scandal spread rapidly and widely, and grew as rapidly as it spread. At the end of half an hour every lady at the picnic had cut the clergyman in a most marked manner. Burning with shame and indignation, he forgot to repair the deficiencies of his toilet, and went home feeling singularly crestfallen.

It was not until he was on the point of seeking a sleepless pillow that he discovered that both his scarlet elastics were in their proper place, while the one which he had picked up at the picnic lay on the table before him. Then the full horror of the situation flashed upon him. The teacher had really lost the article which she had claimed, and which he had seized under the mistaken impression that it was his own.

The utter hopelessness of ever making any satisfactory explanation of the affair was apparent. Early the next morning Mr. Simpkins fled from Slopton a ruined man.

The fatal articles which had caused his downfall he left behind him, and they teach with a mute, but powerful and bright scarlet eloquence the lesson that we should wear the socks we have and never dream of flying to stockings of which we know nothing except by hearsay.

◆

REMARKABLE PRESENCE OF MIND.—Pat Hooligan, while slating the roof of one of our highest buildings, lost his footing and fell.

Over and over he went until within twenty-five feet of the pavement, when he struck a telegraph wire and managed to grasp it, first with one hand, then with both.

"Hang on for your life, Pat!" shouted his fellow-workmen, and the bystanders rushed to the nearest dwelling for a mattress.

Pat held on for a few seconds, when suddenly with a cry of "Sthand from undher," he dropped and lay senseless in the street.

Whiskey was used, and Pat finally came to.

When asked why he didn't hold out longer, he feebly replied:

"Oi wuz afraid the wire 'ud break."

He recovered.

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# FACTS.

ACTORS were so much admired by the late Dr. Morell Mackenzie, that he never charged them for medical advice.

THE other day a flash of lightning from an apparently clear sky stopped all the electric cars in a seaside town in America for more than a quarter of an hour.

IN Plymouth some washerwomen refuse to wash clothes on New Year's Day, lest one of the family should be washed away in the course of the year.

LIZARD wine is said to be a tonic, and a cure for many diseases of the eye. For the brewing of this decoction more than 100,000 dried lizards are annually exported from Pakhoi, in China, valued at £500.

DUTCH military cycling volunteers have to pass a real examination before they are accepted for the manœuvres, but when passed they get five florins a day, first-class travelling fare, and are lodged as officers at the expense of the State.

LORD WINCHILSEA once made a bet that he would find thirty misprints in six numbers of the *Times*. The stakes were £100 with £10 additional for every blunder more or less. Six numbers were taken at random, and three misprints were discovered. Lord Winchilsea lost nearly £400.

THE stalest bread on record is an Assyrian loaf recently discovered by a French explorer. The loaf is supposed to have been baked about the year 560 B.C., and was found wrapped in cloth in a tightly sealed sarcophagus. It is shaped like a bun, and is in excellent condition.

THE first and only photograph ever taken of a snake in the act of biting a man was successfully made the other day by an amateur. While he was photographing a number of captured snakes, one of them bit his friend and the operator was so scared that he involuntarily squeezed the bulb.

DEAD bodies, when taken as cargo on a ship, are always described as either statuary or natural history specimens. This is on account of the superstition of the sailors, which leads them to refuse to work on a ship carrying corpses. Moreover, the knowledge makes the passengers uncomfortable at night.

A SUN-DIAL made for London would be useless for either Paris or Edinburgh. The altitude of the Pole star varies with the latitude, and hence is greater at Edinburgh and less at Paris than at London; and as the style must always point to the Polar star, the angle it makes with the dial plate must vary with the latitude.

A RETURN recently published of the average time occupied by ships in passing through the Suez Canal illustrates in a marked manner the value of the electric light as a saver of time and money. Without the light the journey is accomplished in thirty-one and half hours. With it the time is reduced to less than twenty hours.

WHEN a gunpowder lighter comes alongside a ship all fires are put out. Matches are carefully stowed away, the cook suspends operations, pipes are extinguished, and the heavy chests are carried on board by hand, because a steam crane would necessitate the use of a fire, and if an explosion occurred, the owners would lose their insurance.

HORSES, for hunting and harness purposes, are among the foreign products which are replacing those of British origin. According to Mr. Walter Gilbey, no fewer than 200,000 horses have been imported into this country from abroad during the last twelve years. This means that the British "consumer" has paid away outside the country several millions of pounds which in other circumstances would have gone to native breeders.

ONE of the most curious customs of Siam is that each year is named after an animal, and only certain animals are allowed to inter-marry. A person born in the year of the elephant, for instance, cannot marry a person born in the year of the tiger; neither may the lion mate with the lamb. The law imposes dire penalties upon all who give false ages, or who represent that they are gay gazelles when in fact they are mischievous monkeys, and therefore it is a law which would not be welcome in Western lands.

ALL that compulsory military service does for a man—and there is nothing could do more—compulsory training as a hospital nurse would do for a woman; and one can only admire the proposition, made to the German Government by that remarkable woman, Fräulein Helene Lange, of Berlin, that all girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two should be compelled to serve one year as nurses in the hospital, attendants in the people's kitchens or homes for governesses and servants, in order to increase the number of capable women and attendants necessary in war time.

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# SCIENCE FOR THE UNSCIENTIFIC.

## No. 7.

## What the World is made of.—Water.

WHEN you consider how large a proportion of the earth's surface is covered by the seas, the preponderating importance of water as a constituent of the world is obvious. A little chemistry will tell you that of the solid earth water is in no small measure a component also, and that by far the greater part of the human frame consists of simply water. The most important of the things what make up the world are water and carbon.

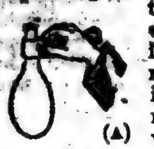
How can water be a component of the solid earth? Very easily. As an example of water forming part of a solid body, take a crystal of alum, of bluestone (sulphate of copper), or of copperas (sulphate of iron), any one of which you can get specimens of for a penny at the chemist's, and look at it carefully. There is nothing to show that any water is contained in the crystal—there are no little fissures or cavities holding it. Smash the crystal up small with a hammer—pound it to a powder if you like—and it will still be dry. Yet, in each of these crystals there is water in considerable quantity, and you can see this water if you go the right way to work. Get an old spoon, into which you have put one of the crystals named, or, better still, the powder obtained by crushing the same, and hold it over a lighted gas jet. In a very little while the crystal or powder will begin to swell and bubble, the water in it escaping as steam, and by the time the whole of the substance has been well heated only a dry powder will be left.

If bluestone was the crystal used in the last experiment, you will not have failed to notice that there was a marked change of colour when the water was driven off. The blue became much paler. Add a drop of water to the desiccated sulphate of copper, and you will see the deep blue instantly return! The water contained in crystals is essential to their crystallisation—that is, to their retention of regular and beautiful geometrical form. It does not enter into the strictly chemical composition of the salt forming the crystal. Sulphate of copper is still sulphate of copper, with the crystalline form destroyed by driving off the water. Salts are crystallised by slowly evaporating their solutions, and you may conduct a really beautiful experiment on these lines with what is left of the pennyworth of alum or bluestone named in the first experiment. Even common table-salt will do, though for a reason to be presently mentioned it requires to be a little differently treated.

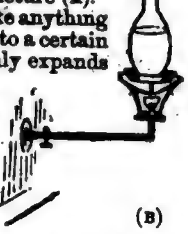
Have some boiling hot water in an earthenware or glass vessel, and dissolve your alum or bluestone in it a little at a time, until the water will not take up any more. Let the solution cool, and then pour it off, keeping back any undissolved salt, into a shallow dish or saucer; and put it away where it is not liable to be shaken, for twelve hours.

You will find on looking next day at the bottom of the saucer or dish, some beautiful gem-like crystals of the salt, at first isolated and perfect, but presently joining into a mass, which prevents your distinguishing the shape so clearly. The angles and facets of the crystals are of exquisite sharpness and accuracy.

I have spoken of boiling water in a glass vessel. It is very easy to do this if you are careful, and an empty salad-oil flask is suitable and cheap. Strip off the rushen covering and wash the flask repeatedly with hot water and soda until there is no greasiness left. Now our oil flask will stand a good deal of heat without breaking, because it is very *thin*. The reason that bottles break under the influence of heat is that one part of the glass becomes hotter than the rest, and expanding (as nearly everything does when heated) more than the cooler parts, breaks away and so cracks the vessel. Cold water poured into a hot glass breaks it, for the converse reasons. To heat a glass flask slowly, it is a very good plan to stand it in a little mince-pie tin filled with sand. A small wire lamp shade holder can be made, with a little bending, to hold the tin over the gas—as shown in the picture (B). To handle the flask without burning yourself, take a long strip of thick paper folded several times until it is about an inch and a half wide, put it round the neck of the flask, and hold it with finger and thumb—see the annexed picture (A).


(A)

When water is heated it expands, like anything else. When it cools it contracts down to a certain point; but just as it freezes it suddenly expands again, and this expansion is a force of tremendous power. We recognise it by the fact that it bursts the water pipes in a frost, though we do not know anything about it until the water thaws again, and can run out. The force is of such power as to rend rocks and split mountains.


(B)

In speaking of the force of crystallisation above, I called it "irresistible." You may illustrate this fact in a striking manner by thoroughly soaking a piece of porous earthenware, such as part of an unglazed flower-pot, in a strong solution of alum or some such salt, then stand it up in the solution so that part is exposed to the air. In a day or two you will find that the salt, crystallising in the pores of the earthenware, will have split it into flakes. You can crumble the hard baked clay of the flower-pot with your fingers.

Water is important in another way, because there are not many things that it will not dissolve; but the consequence is that it is very hard to get *pure* water in Nature. The water from the tap in your kitchen contains in solution certain chlorides—substances like common salt—in their composition, which cannot be got out by filtering. They are not of very great importance. Lime salts in water are important, because they make water what is called "hard." It is not so good for washing, and it deposits a crust or "fur" when boiled.

Of course, everyone knows that water converted into steam can be cooled again into the form of water. This is called distilling, and distilled water is free from dissolved salts. Rain water is pure, like artificially distilled water, if caught in a clean vessel.

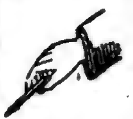
To show the difference between ordinary water and distilled or rain water, the old-fashioned experiment by which that queer-looking object, a lead tree, is produced may be mentioned. Our grandfathers thought the lead tree very beautiful, but the present generation seems to have forgotten it. However, as it follows naturally on our present subject, it may as well be described once more, after we have done with the question of the purity of water.

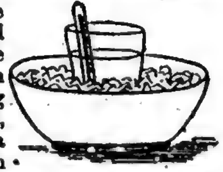
The substance commonly called sugar of lead—which is a poison, but not otherwise dangerous if you take care to keep it away from your food—is really acetate of lead. Now the soluble salts of just three metals—namely, lead, silver, and mercury—are a delicate test for the presence of chlorides in water, because it happens that the chlorides of these metals themselves are not soluble. If you dissolve sugar of lead in water that contains chlorides you get a milky solution, not a clear one. But if you dissolve it in clean rain water the solution is quite clear.

Take a pennyworth of sugar of lead, and dissolve a little of it in rain water. To the clean solution add a few grains of salt, which is chemically called chloride of sodium. The result will be a thick, heavy powder, falling to the bottom, and refusing to dissolve. This is because of a chemical action forming the insoluble chloride of lead.

Now for the lead tree. Get a scrap of zinc, and make a hole through it with a drill (or hammer a hole through with a bradawl), and then hang the zinc on a piece of copper wire. Fill a small pickle jar half full of clean rain water, in which the remainder of the sugar of lead has been dissolved, and having stuck the wire through the bung or cork, allow the zinc and wire to hang into the solution thus: In a few days a sort of growth, really consisting of metallic lead, will have deposited itself, an effect which is due to the lead separating itself from the other elements in the acetate of lead.

Water has this peculiarity that it is known in Nature in all three forms—solid, liquid, and gaseous, as we found when we were thinking about it in a previous article of the present series. It boils, as we all know, at 212 degrees, and freezes at 32 degrees. You cannot cool steam one degree below 212 degrees without its becoming condensed into water again. You cannot raise ice one degree above 32 degrees without its melting. But, if you are very careful, you can cool water below freezing point without its freezing. Here is another simple experiment that is very striking, and that only needs a pennyworth of ice from the fishmongers. You may perhaps even be able to get the ice from a stream or pond by the time these lines are in print. Put the ice, broken small, into a bowl, mixing it with a handful of salt, and stand in the mixture a glass of pure water, in which stand a thermometer. As you know, the effect of the ice and salt will be to freeze the water. In a little time the mercury or spirit in the thermometer will fall to thirty-two degrees, and later on, below this. If you are careful not to shake the table, you may get the temperature down to twenty-eight or twenty-seven without any ice forming. But now, without waiting too long, touch the surface of the water in the glass with a lead pencil, and the ice will form like a flash!





There is a similar experiment, requiring our fourth outlay of a penny this week, to be made with sulphate of soda, sometimes called Glauber's salt. If you dissolve just as much of this as the water will take up, in a flask of boiling water, and boil it for a little while longer, there will be in the flask a larger quantity of the salt than *cold* water will hold in solution. Be very careful to let the flask get quite cold without being shaken. When it *is* quite cold—next day, for choice—give it a sharp shake, and you will see the actual process of crystallisation take place before your eyes—with really beautiful effect. The flask will instantly become full of crystals.

## A CHRISTMAS ANTIQUE.

A DASHING widow, who had received marked attentions from a very popular and gallant physician, found herself suddenly deserted. Her Æsculapius, age fifty-two, was completely enthralled by a beauty of eighteen, and on Christmas morning the wedding took place with all due pomp. Wormwood for the widow! She swallowed it bravely, wore an undaunted front, and was among the first to offer hurried congratulations to the happy pair. The conversation turned upon Christmas gifts, and the bride said, laughing gaily:

"All my wedding presents were sent just before Christmas, so on Christmas morning I had not a single gift."

"Ah, my dear, that is cruel; you had me," said the bridegroom, reproachfully. Before the pretty bride could answer, the widow's eyes grew dangerous, and, swinging slowly her large fan, she murmured: "Surely, my dear Mrs. X——, you should be more than satisfied, for, you know, antiquities are all the rage."

In the awful silence following, the widow rose, carefully arranged her draperies, and bowed her adieu in stately serenity. Dr. X—— and his bride never returned her call.

## THE PROFITS OF THE PLAYWRIGHT.

A WRITER of plays nowadays is generally paid on the system of results. Obviously this is the fairest method that could be adopted. If the piece is to be a good one, it is right that the author should participate in its success on a progressive scale; if bad, or at least unattractive to the public, it is equally just that he should pay the penalty of his mistakes. In the case of an established playwright, ten per cent. on the gross receipts may be considered to be the rule; but even this limit is at times exceeded. In some instances a sliding scale is determined upon, and this perhaps is fairest to all.

Under such a contract the author receives five per cent. upon all takings until the amount of the weekly expenses has been reached. These, at a theatre where society plays or melodrama of not too elaborate a kind is being represented, may be estimated roughly at £500. On the next £200 encashed seven and a half per cent. is allowed, and on any sum taken over and above these two figures combined ten per cent. For simplicity's sake, however, we may consider the last as the rate agreed to.

Putting aside Drury Lane and the Lyceum, which, of course, are exceptional in holding capacity, an average London theatre will contain from £200 to £300, or, taking the mean, £250. But even when, technically speaking, the house is full, the total probably does not much surpass £200. A week's business at present includes at least one matinee, so that we have seven performances at £200 each, giving a gross receipt of £1,400. Upon that the author receives his royalty of 10 per cent., or, say, £140.

But this does not by any means represent the full extent of his remuneration, for besides London there are the English provinces, the colonies, and America, which last has well been called the dramatists' gold-mine. The English playwright will experience greater difficulty in collecting what is due to him there, and he will probably find it to his interest in the end to employ for this purpose a responsible agent, who will charge him 15 per cent. on the sums received.

Even under these circumstances he can, however, have small reason to complain. In the provinces, where the company plays on the sharing system (*i.e.*, the local manager providing the theatre, attendants, gas, etc., the other the piece and performers, and the two thereafter dividing the profits), the author cannot reckon upon more than 5 per cent. of the gross receipts—a perfectly just arrangement as between him and the organiser of the tour.

* * *

**A DECAYED GENTLEMAN.**—Mrs. Spriggings (to persistent beggar): "A week ago, Walker, I gave you a good pair of trousers. Why do you come to me again in the same old rags?"

Walker (with dignity): "The garment, madam, with which you accommodated me was some three inches too short; so I have stored it with a pawnbroker. Poor as I am I have not forgotten that a gentleman's attire should be well fitting, however worn and threadbare."

* * *

**SHE WILL MAKE AN ABLE PARTNER.**—"Tom, I hear that you are engaged to Miss Spider."

"Yes."

"But do you intend to marry her?"

"Why not?"

"Is it possible that you have not heard?"

"Heard what?"

"That she has, at different times, sued five men for breaches of promise?"

"Yes, I heard that."

"And still you intend to marry her?"

"Of course. She won all the suits, and as I am a lawyer I cannot help but admire her skill. She will make me an able partner, old boy, and business is so slow with me that I cannot afford to let such an opportunity slip through my fingers."

See foot of Column 1, page 352, for a notice about our New Ladies' Paper.

# INDIAN SUMMER IN NORWAY

### VII.—SUFFERINGS AND SCENERY.

CONSIDERING the manner of our arrival, we were most comfortably entertained at Naes, and in the morning, when I pulled up the blind of my bedroom window, I was well pleased to find the sun once more shining out of a cloudless sky. The waters of the lake confined by the steep sloping shores of a lovely little bay, were unruffled by the lightest breeze, and as blue as the eye of Heaven itself.

I threw the window open, and, early morning as it was, the air that came in was only just cold enough to be crisp, and invigorating as a glass of good champagne, and there was no sign of approaching winter, save that the patches of snow on the upper slopes of the mountains had crept down a little lower than they had been at sunset.

I took as lengthy a stroll as the uncompromising nature of the lake shore would let me before breakfast, and by the time we had eaten our fill and paid our bill, the conveyances that were to take us to Odde, our next stopping-place, were at the door. I thought we were going to have a bright and early start, but here I reckoned without the Norwegian's lofty contempt for the flight of time. The Doctor had a little business to arrange with the hotel-keeper and posting-master with reference to next year's touring operations. He told me afterwards that in England he could have fixed it up in ten minutes. At Naes he stood and talked for a solid hour by my Waterbury before it was possible to give the word to start.

When a Norwegian has any business to do he begins by taking it for granted that the planet has stopped its diurnal revolutions to allow him to get his affairs settled without undue hurry. This is true, not only of little out-of-the-way places like Naes, but of the cities as well. I don't understand Norwegian, but it seems a wonderful language for wasting time in. No one seemed to think that there was anything out of the common in the elongation of the discussion. The drivers were paid by distance, not time, so it wasn't very expensive, and the ponies were placidly content. As for me, I walked to and fro on as much shore as I could get to stretch my legs, and—well, wondered audibly when we were going to start.

But when we did at length start, I found myself wishing just as fervently that we were at the other end of the journey. We had a conveyance apiece this time, and the vehicles appeared to have been specially designed to develop that capability for profanity which is supposed to be one the most salient effects of original sin. The thing I was sitting in, or perhaps I should say trying to sit in, is called in the vernacular a "stolkjaerre," and when I say that the thing itself is as awkward as its name looks, the intelligent reader may perhaps be able to form some idea of what I suffered in it.

The English of the name is said to be "stool-carriage," or a carriage with a seat in it. That may be all right etymologically, but rationally and as a matter of fact there is only one translation for the word, and that is bone-shaker. It is a little go-cart, mounted on medium-sized wheels, and just between these wheels is poised the seat. The Norwegian pony is a good goer, but he has a rather rocking-horse kind of trot, and the motion that he communicates along the shafts to the seat gives, according to my most minute calculations, four jerks forwards, five backwards, and three upwards to each yard that he travels.

When he canters, as he always does down a more or less steep hill, your only choice is between falling out and gripping the seat with both hands and holding your last meal down by main force. I had not travelled a mile before I was wishing fervently that the misguided genius who invented these perambulatory instruments of torture had been tied tightly in the first one he made, and driven at full speed down the steepest road in Norway into the deepest lake between the North Cape and the Kattegat.

I did reach my journey's end in one piece, but that was only because the mountainous nature of the road gave me a good excuse for getting out and doing several miles of walking.

The road from Naes to Röldal is said by those who know the country well to be one of the loveliest and most wonderful drives in Norway. There was a time when it was impossible, simply because there was no road. When the dwellers on the northern shore of the lake were told that a road was going to be made through the Bratlandsdal, a magnificent but most uncompromising valley, running between high mountains, fenced with huge rock-walls, and broken by gigantic boulders and rock reefs, through and over which the Bratland rushes in a boiling, foaming torrent of sea-green, foam-crowned water, they laughed in a sort of superior, old-fashioned way, and asked whether the engineers were going to get the trolls and fairies to help them.

But when, later on, they saw the workmen hung in slings over the perpendicular face of the rocks, driving in their drills to make way for the blasting charges, incredulity turned to wonder; and truly a wonderful piece of engineering that road through the Bratlandsdal is. It is as smooth as the drive up to the door of an English country house, and as nicely graded as if it had been made for a railway, and yet nearly every yard of it has been hewn and blasted out of solid rock. In fact, in some places it passes through tunnels and under huge overhanging masses, above which the cliffs tower for more than a thousand feet into the sky.

The scenery reminded me of the course of the Canadian Pacific Railway through Eagle's Pass, only, of course, here it was in minature. But, still, in its way the effect was not wanting, because the eye could take it all in at a glance, while in the Rockies the colossal scale on which Nature had built her mighty edifices produced a sense of self-insignificance that almost amounted to oppression.

After a while the mountains began to recede from each other, the valley broadened out, and the stream became more placid. Then it narrowed again, and the road took a winding upward sweep through a magnificent gorge, which, after a couple of miles or so, opened out again, and gave us our first glimpse of the lovely lake of Röldal, a splendid sheet of water lying embosomed among great grey masses of mountains, which rose in height after height to the lower limits of great snow-fields, which stretched away up into the sky in white gleaming expanses, broken here and there by peaks of rock too steep for the snow and ice to cling to.

I say mountains of rock advisedly, because the impression I got from them, and from many others, was that the mountains of Norway are simply colossal masses of stone, such as one might well imagine to have been laid down to make the foundations of the world.

At Röldal we changed horses, or rather ponies, and here the Doctor had some more business to do, so that I had an hour or so to spare, which was amply filled by my efforts to absorb the details of one of the most delightful pieces of scenery that I have seen in all my wanderings. When the new ponies were harnessed up I found that our road lay in many windings of steepness up over the Breifons Pass, and I gladly took the opportunity of taking at once a further respite from the tortures of the bone-shaker, and a most glorious climb up through the lake valley, over wild slopes of moorland, and between huge masses of gaunt, broken rocks, until at last I sat down under the lee of a big boulder above the snow-line, and, after a well-earned pull from my flask, lit a pipe and waited while the bone-shakers crept up the long sweeps of the road, and feasted my eyes on a landscape that began with the snowy heights around me, and stretched away over steep, ragged rock walls, down which the mountain streams leapt in shining cascades to the pastures of the lower slopes, and the mirror-like surface of the lake three thousand feet below.

When at length the vehicles reached the summit of the pass, I resigned myself to further suffering, and was jolted and bumped down a road which from below looks as though its constructors had taken a corkscrew for their pattern, through gorges and valleys, lined with forest and vocal with waterfalls, until at last, when the night had changed their beauty into sombre weirdness, we pulled up before the verandah of the Hardanger Hotel at Röldal, and I collected my limbs and other portions of my anatomy, and fell out with thankful anticipations of supper and bed.

◆

FROM the shop-front of a French hatter: "Latest novelty. Soft felt hats for railway collisions."

◆

JUDGE (to prisoner): "Your statement does not agree with the evidence of the last witness."

Prisoner: "I don't wonder. He's a bigger liar than I am."

◆

ECONOMY IS WEALTH.—Little Iky Schaumburg having fallen and raised a lump on his forehead, somebody suggested to his mother that she press a half-crown on the bruised place, which would cause the swelling to subside.

"Repecca," said Moses Schaumburg. "you don't need a whole half-crown. Schoost press a penny on that bump. Vat you vant to indulge in so many extravagances?"

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THIRTY-TWO PAGES. PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED.

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***Price Threepence, with Coloured Plate.***

## SHOULD A MAN WHEEL A PERAMBULATOR?

IT is a nice point, and one that has never been definitely settled by public opinion, whether, in the event of both parents sallying forth for a walk with their offspring, the husband or the wife should wheel the perambulator. As things are now, the operation is undertaken by the one who by mutual consent appears to be most fitted for the task, but it is an incontrovertible fact that the origin of more than one family feud may be traced to a divergence of opinion between father and mother on this point.

Certain circumstances exist under which a man may, with every degree of fitness, and without the smallest risk of endangering his sense of parental dignity, wheel a perambulator, in the same way as he might, if called upon, and always provided that he is physically capable, turn the domestic mangle in the privacy of his home.

At night, for example, on the return journey from some friend's house, when few people are about, and he is not likely to be recognised by acquaintances, there would be no disgrace in a man trundling along the baby-carriage. This would not be a cowardly act, as some much-biased people are apt to think. Every man enjoys a certain amount of self-respect, and if a husband fancies that by wheeling the perambulator in broad daylight, and under the very eyes of his acquaintances, who cherish a sort of secret contempt for him in the capacity of nurse-maid, he is violating that self-respect, he is acting in a perfectly straight-forward and honest manner in waiting till it is dark.

As another example of the time when a man is more a man for taking the handle of the perambulator may be quoted the instance of the steep hill and the tired wife. Be it daylight or lamplight, under these circumstances the man should swallow his pride, and push. No wife with any degree of respect for her husband, however, would allow him to take her place, except in the last extremity.

Be it understood, however, that many a devoted husband indulges in this sport, not from a sense of duty to his better half, but from a sensation of pleasure. If the father who sees very little of his children during the week, except when they are asleep, is devoted to them, nothing will give him greater happiness than to get a Sunday afternoon out with them, on their legs or stowed away in the perambulator, as the case may be.

But here the line should be drawn. The man who manifests in broad daylight a keen enjoyment in pushing a perambulator most surely exhibits effeminate inclinations, and a man of such a nature as this might fairly be expected to wash and dress the baby and cook the dinner.

As to whether a man or a woman is the more capable of steering the wheeled torpedo through the sea of humanity that floods the city streets, it is a matter entirely of individual opinion, but, in view of the fact that there are nearly a million more women than men in Great Britain, I suppose the female opinion preponderates.

The wheeling of a perambulator under practically every condition is an encroachment upon the field of woman's labour, but in certain cases an encroachment that may be tolerated, and even desired. Man was built for something nobler, and his should be a higher aim, and it were impossible to sufficiently emphasise the fact that it was ordained for him to guide the destinies of the world

If he is capable of guiding the destinies of the world and a perambulator at the same time, then truly you have that which is magnanimous and that which is ignominious portrayed in one body, for at no moment of his daily existence does a full-grown and able-bodied man look more effeminate than when trotting behind a perambulator—except, perhaps, when sitting in it.

To sum up, then, it may be said that a man who trundles a baby-carriage wantonly and for the pleasure thereof, is unmanly, and manifests a depraved, effeminate taste; while he who, from an aggregation of unfavourable circumstances, finds it incumbent upon him to propel the family hold-all, may do so without jeopardising his manliness, and may be counted as a kind and considerate husband.

◆

LITTLE FANNY looked intently at her mother for some time. Then she said:

"Mother, you ain't a girl, are you?"

"No, Fanny."

"What are you?"

"I am a woman."

"You were a girl once, weren't you?"

"Yes, Fanny."

"Well, where is that girl now?"

◆

AT a social evening, a musical young lady played and sang a piece called "Sylvan Sounds," in which the singing and notes of the linnet and the lark were imitated.

"Did not that young lady's singing remind you of the singing of birds? You might have thought she was really a bird."

"Yes, but I never saw a bird sit down at a table after it had got through singing and hide away three or four cups of tea, half a ham, and enough cake and ice cream to satisfy a Sunday-school picnic. You never saw a lark or linnet do that, did you?"

Christmas Stories! Christmas Stories!! Christmas Stories!!! See the issue of *Short Stories*, on sale Saturday, December 22nd.

# HOME NOTES.

A PAGE MORE PARTICULARLY FOR LADIES.

*ISOBEL will be glad to answer, in this page, questions of general interest upon household matters, so far as space permits. Envelopes should be marked* HOME NOTES.

***Camphor should not be Placed next to Furs,*** as it makes the colour of them lighter.

***When Boiling Green Vegetables,*** place a crust of bread in the water, to prevent the unpleasant smell which usually arises during the process.

***When Making Raised or any Kind of Pie*** which has a bottom crust, brush the bottom over with beaten egg on the inside. This will prevent the gravy from soaking into it, and the crust, therefore, from becoming sodden.

***A Simple Way to Frost a Cake.*** As you tell me you do not care to ice your cake in the ordinary way, follow this simple method:—The day after the cake is made brush it over with white of egg, then sprinkle it thickly with castor sugar, which, if of good quality, will give it the effect of frost.

***Babies Require Water to Drink*** as much as grown-up persons, and it is a great mistake to think they should never be allowed to touch it. When a child is fretful, sometimes a drink of water, say a teaspoonful at a time, will quiet it. The child is really thirsty, and milk does not serve to quench its thirst.

***Stewed Mutton with Celery.*** Take a piece of the scrag end of mutton, place it in a saucepan, cover it with hot water, and stew gently for an hour. Then add half an onion and one large head of celery cut in pieces an inch long. Let all stew together until tender, take up the meat, slightly thicken the gravy, season with pepper and salt, and pour round the meat. Scatter chopped parsley over, and serve.

***Kitchen Stove.*** The reason that you have so much difficulty with your stove, that you tell me sometimes is not even warm, and at others so hot that everything burns, is this: Your cook does not keep the flues clean regularly, nor does she see that the top of the oven is kept free from soot. This last requires brushing every morning, and the flues cleaned once or twice a week, according to the amount of cooking done. Give this matter your attention, and I am sure you will have no further trouble with the stove. (*Reply to* MONA H.)

***A Cheap Puff Paste*** is made by mixing half a pound of flour with one teaspoonful of baking powder, and the same quantity of salt; mix well together, and then work into a stiff paste with water. Weigh out three ounces of dripping or lard, and two ounces of butter. Roll the paste on a floured board, spread it with lard or butter, and fold it three times; that is so that it is three times as thick as when spread. Flour it well, roll out again, and repeat the process, spreading it with lard or butter three times. Lay the paste on one side some time before using, twenty-four hours is not too much, then roll out thin. Bake in a sharp oven. (*Reply to* NELLA.)

***The New Paper*** which I am bringing out, and of which I have given a short note previously in this page, will be published on December 28th for January 1st, and will be called "THE HOME DRESSMAKER." It is a monthly paper, and will be entirely devoted to fashions, for my experience in HOME NOTES paper has shown me that that subject is capable of considerable development, and, as it is impossible to do this otherwise, I have decided to bring out a monthly paper of fashions. So that the designs may be of the very best, and, in fact, second to those of no other paper, I have engaged the first fashion artists of the day, and I am glad to tell you that on the staff of "THE HOME DRESSMAKER" are Misses Lilian Young, M. F. Young, Reynell Mohun, Martin, and Miss Marsden, better known under her signature "M." The new paper will be twice as large as HOME NOTES (this is to enable a better display of the fashions), and will contain sixteen pages, profusely illustrated throughout. To make this paper of practical use in the home, I have arranged that patterns of every fashion therein depicted shall be supplied from this office, at our usual low rates. *The price of the paper is 1½d. only, which is ridiculously low, when it is taken into consideration that with every copy one of our paper patterns of a new and fashionable design will be given away.* Please order "THE HOME DRESSMAKER" of your newsagent early, so that you may not be disappointed in getting the January number.

***In Households Like Yours,*** where many cakes are made, it would be well to keep a Yorkshire pie-tin, half covered with dry sand, on which to stand the cake-tins. With this plan there is very little danger of burning cakes at the bottom. (*Reply to* ADA.)

***Christmas Cake.*** Take a pound of fine flour, carefully dry and sift it, and rub into it six ounces of butter. Then add half a pound of castor sugar and half a pound of mixed fruit, one ounce of chopped almonds and three ounces of chopped peel. Beat three eggs (the yolks and whites separately) with a gill of milk, stir into the cake, and then add half a teaspoonful of mixed spice stirred into three tablespoonfuls of brandy. Beat all together, place in a greased tin, and bake in a moderate oven for two or two and a half hours.

***Plain Buns.*** Here is a useful recipe for holiday time: One pound of flour, a quarter of a pound of brown sugar, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one teaspoonful of mixed spice, three ounces of butter or dripping. Mix the dry ingredients together, and then rub the butter (or dripping) well into them. If liked, add three ounces of currants or sultanas. Beat an egg with a gill of milk, add this to the dry ingredients, and knead into a stiff dough. Flour a baking-sheet, and on it place pieces of the dough the size of a hen's egg. Brush over with sugar and water, and bake for twenty minutes.

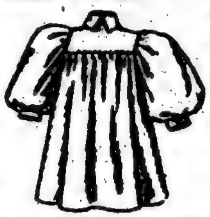
***Toast*** is one of those simple things which one rarely gets well made. Most servants seem to think that any piece of bread just brown is all that is required, but this is not so. Really good toast is delicious and wholesome, while the sodden thick stuff which is usually served is very much the reverse. Cut some thin slices of bread, place them over the rack or in the oven to dry a little. Bake before a nice clear fire, so that they are perfectly crisp, trim off the crusts, and send to table in a rack. Toast should never be served on a plate, or the steam will make it sodden, however carefully it has been baked in the first place.

***Ginger Wine.*** This recipe has been kindly sent me by a correspondent, who assures me that, in addition to being inexpensive and quickly prepared, the wine made thus is an excellent stomachic:—Take one ounce of essence of ginger, half an ounce of cayenne, three-quarters of an ounce of tartaric acid, and three pounds of lump sugar. Pour on to the sugar and tartaric acid five quarts of boiling water, and when quite cold add the essences. Colour with burnt sugar, and the beverage is at once fit for consumption. It is worthy of note that this wine costs little more than fourpence per quart. (*Thanks to* R. ALDRED.)

***A Good Parsley Sauce.*** You should have no difficulty in making this very simple sauce. I give you my recipe, and trust that by following it you will be successful in future. Place an ounce of butter in a saucepan, and blend with it an ounce of flour. Stir until perfectly smooth, and then add three-quarters of a pint of light stock. Stir the sauce over the fire until quite smooth and thick, then stand it at the side of the fire till required. Finely chop some parsley and add a tablespoonful of it to the sauce, season with pepper and salt, and it is ready to serve. Sauces always improve by being made some little time before they are required. (*Reply to* EDNA SANT.)

***Two Recipes for Mincemeat.*** *Apple Mincemeat.*—Half a pound each of currants, apples, finely-chopped beef suet, moist sugar, and raisins, stoned and chopped, to which add the juice of two oranges and lemons, half a teaspoonful of mixed spice, and a wineglassful of brandy. Stir together, and place in a jar until required. *Egg Mincemeat* is one not often met with, but, all the same, is very good. Hard boil three eggs, pass them through a sieve, add to them six ounces of beef suet, chopped finely, a pound of currants, two pieces of finely-chopped candied lemon peel, six ounces of sugar, half a wineglassful of brandy, and spice to taste. Mix all well together, and place in a jar for use.

***A Child's Overall Dress*** should be a pattern most useful to the many mothers who are readers of this page. The frock is at once comfortable for the child to wear, and one which will last. The full Bishop sleeves are very pretty, and as they allow plenty of room at the elbow, there is no possibility of holes appearing, as they do all too soon in a tight-fitting sleeve. You did not give me your address, so I could not reply to you before. I daresay, though, that many mothers besides yourself will be glad of the information, and will find the little child's frock (No. 6018, price 6d.) most useful to them. (*Reply to* Mrs. HEALY, Bradford.)



***When Preparing Apples for a Pie,*** do not slice them, but core them and cut them in quarters, for in this way they cook better.

***A Good Mouth Wash.*** Place a pint of cold water in a bottle, and add to it two or three crystals of permanganate of potash, sufficient to make the liquid a light crimson colour. Wash out the mouth with this daily.

***A Useful and Pretty Cupboard for a Bedroom.*** Get an orange box with two divisions, which can be bought at any grocer's for 3d. or 6d., neatly line it with pretty paper—any left from papering a room will do—and drape the outside with cretonne. Then trim a piece of the same material with lace, or work a square for the top, to hide where the drapery is nailed on. Curtains to match should then be placed in front, and slightly drawn back with a bow of ribbon, which adds to the effect. This makes a most useful receptacle for boots, shoes, and other things which so often litter a bedroom for want of a proper resting-place.

***Soot Stains on a Carpet.*** I am sorry indeed to hear that your carpet is so spoilt with the falling soot, especially as the stain will be now more difficult to eradicate. By brushing the soot when it was on the carpet you brushed it into the fabric. I should now advise your rubbing it several times with clean, dry bran, and afterwards brushing it out well. Should you be troubled in the same way again, before having the soot removed cover it thickly with salt, then sweep it up carefully, and there will be no stains left. The carpet will require a good shaking after being treated in this way, for should any salt be left in it, it will become moist in damp weather, and finally rot the carpet. (*Reply to* DISTRACTED.)

***Home-Made Crackers.*** With the festive season at hand, many of my readers will, I feel confident, be glad to know how to make crackers for themselves. Get some brightly-tinted papers and cut them in pieces about three inches by four. Cut one end of each paper into a fringe, and gum two pieces together so that there is a fringe at each end. Buy from a toy-shop some "Waterloo Crackers," and paste each end of one to the inside of the joined papers; arrange so that the centre of the cracker shall be over the joining. If you have any mottoes, wrap one round a sugared almond or any nice hard sweetmeat, roll the coloured paper up neatly, stick it together with a little gum, tie up the two ends with gold cord or some ribbon, and spread out the fringe. (*Reply to* DORA TWISS.)

***How to Wash Babies' Socks.*** I have had several requests lately for information with regard to washing babies' woollen socks, which, I am told, shrink so quickly as to be only usable for a very short time. Place a small piece of yellow soap in a bowl, and pour over it as much boiling water as will be required. Stir the soap about until dissolved, leave until luke-warm, then place the socks and vests in the water. Stir them about, and squeeze in the hands until clean, but on no account rub any soap on them. Then rinse in clean water which has a little soap in it, wring the water out, and hang them up to dry. When half dry, take the socks, etc., down, pull them into shape, and hang up again until thoroughly aired. I am glad to hear from you again, and hope that my information will be of use. (*Reply to* JAPAN.)

Isobel

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All copy must be sent in by Noon on Thursday, Dec. 27, if intended for the Issue on sale Jan. 5, and dated Jan. 12.

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Advertisers, please note that all communications should be addressed to "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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## THE THEATRICAL SEASON IN LONDON.

AT a time when the theatrical season is in full swing, it may be interesting to reproduce the portraits of some of the favourite artists appearing at the present time, or who will shortly appear, on the boards of our principal lyric and dramatic stages. Among others may be mentioned Madame Albani, whose great talent is daily more and more appreciated at the important concerts; Madame Melba, who holds out the hope of a speedy return; Madame Sigrid Arnoldson, the popular prima donna of the Covent Garden Opera; Madame Sarah Bernhardt, whose new piece, "Gismonda," by Victorien Sardou, is very shortly to be produced in this country; Mrs. Langtry, the "Jersey Lily;" Mademoiselle Yvette Guilbert, who, owing to the lamented death of the late Czar, was prevented from fulfilling an engagement at St. Petersburg at a fabulous salary, and has therefore recently now appeared with tremendous success at the Empire Theatre. A not uninteresting subject at the commencement of this winter season is to gather the ideas and the advice of these famous artistes as to the means they employ to preserve their voice and to prevent colds, so easily caught at the theatre, especially behind the scenes. With this object in view, M. Géraudel, the inventor of the celebrated pastilles which bear his name, has been invited to make known the opinion of these artistes, and here, together with their portraits and signatures, are extracts from some of the letters which have been sent to him. These pastilles, as everyone knows, can be had of all chemists at 1s. 1½d. per case of 72 pastilles.

**Mme. MELBA.**

*I find Géraudel's Pastilles excellent for the throat. I very often use them when I am hoarse, and they do me a great deal of good. Yours faithfully,*

Nellie Melba

**Mme. ALBANI.**

*I have been using Géraudel's Pastilles for some time, and can testify to their being most efficacious for cough or irritation of the throat. There is no doubt of their being of great service to singers. I am, yours very faithfully,*

E. Albani Gye

**Mme. SARAH BERNHARDT.**

*The cold weather is upon us, so be kind enough to send me a further supply of Géraudel's Pastilles.—Compliments.*

Sarah Bernhardt

**Mdlle. YVETTE GUILBERT.**

*My Dear Sir,—At one time it was a trouble for me to sing one or two songs; now I am happy to tell you that, thanks to Géraudel's Pastilles, my voice is so much strengthened that I can sing eight or ten without feeling any fatigue. You have my permission to publish this.*

Yvette Guilbert

**Mrs. LANGTRY.**

*Géraudel's Pastilles for the throat and voice have been tried by me, and I am happy to testify to their beneficial results. Yours faithfully,*

Lillie Langtry

**Miss FLORENCE St. JOHN.**

*I have pleasure in informing you that I have tried Géraudel's Pastilles with great success, and although suffering from a very bad cold, they gave me such relief that I was enabled to continue my performance without interruption. I can thoroughly recommend them for strengthening and clearing the voice. Yours very truly,*

Florence St. John

# LET IT BE KNOWN THAT

I AM offering one guinea for the best set of titles to the eighteen chapters in the third novel of *Pearson's Library*, which, as you know, is entitled "Thro' the Battle Smoke." This fascinating story is illustrated throughout by Mr. Kemp Tebby, and forms one of the cheapest and most artistic publications to be seen at your newsagent's or on the bookstall. The chance of winning a guinea, combined with the certainty of some hours' diversion in the shape of an absorbing novel, should be sufficient return for a sixpence invested in "Thro' the Battle Smoke." Lists of titles must reach this office, in envelopes marked "Library," by Friday, December 28th.

The readers of *P.W.* are again asked to display their artistic powers in competition for fifty pencil-cases, which are offered to the fifty persons sending the cleverest sketches of a dog, to be drawn on the back of a postcard. The drawings must be composed entirely of straight lines, not more than forty to be used in all. Postcards to reach this office on or before Tuesday, January 1st.

B. A. S.—Just as for thousands of years some of the most enterprising builders and skilful architects the world has ever seen never conceived the idea of constructing an arch, so the arrangement of galleries in tiers, rising one above another, now such a common sight in theatres and churches and other public buildings, is entirely modern, dating from the seventeenth century. It is a popular mistake, by the way, to suppose that galleries were originally intended for the exclusive use of women. This may have arisen from the disgusting habit some people have of making puns, or from the fact that in the older German and French churches the side aisles were divided into two stories—the upper filled with seats for the use of ladies only. At all events there is nothing in it.

G. S. K.—Numerically, the Quakers have never been a powerful sect. Their numbers, I believe, have never exceeded 200,000, and at the present time there are only 120,000 members. At least 90,000 of these belong to the United States.

G. S. D.—The berries of many species of the fuchsia are eaten with sugar in their native countries, but they are very seldom preserved in England.

A. J. S.—The idea that the Queen may not travel exactly when and where she wishes without the permission of Parliament, is utter nonsense. In 1702, I think it was, an Act was passed forbidding King William III. to quit his dominions without obtaining leave from the representatives of the country, and this necessity arose from his frequent visits to Holland. This remained in force until the accession of George I., who added Hanover to the Crown, and was consequently allowed to go there at will. Since that time there has been no restriction whatever.

IN a frivolous mood a few weeks ago I published a little paragraph, which said that the people of Guernsey and Jersey never laugh, and even the children are sober-minded. I have now discovered that they cannot see a joke either. Several communications have reached me, gravely discussing this serious charge against the inhabitants, and denying that lovers exchange their vows on the tombstones. I am told that such a thing is impossible, because all the cemeteries are closed at sunset, and the fair sex mostly flirt with the visitors. This information throws a new light on the subject, and I shall take the earliest opportunity of going over to the Channel Isles and personally investigating the matter.

F. A. S.—The tax of one guinea on the use of hair-powder was repealed in 1869. It was first imposed in 1795, and at one time yielded £20,000 a year.

IT is an interesting point raised by a correspondent this week: How far is a doctor justified in keeping back the knowledge of a disease from his patient? This has always appeared to me a very difficult subject, and I know from personal observation that it is a matter upon which people hold widely divergent views. While it is obviously necessary under certain circumstances to keep a sufferer in ignorance of his condition, it is an undeniable fact that many people are so constituted that the smallest suspicion that some knowledge is being held back is infinitely more harmful than an actual conversance with the true state of affairs would be. The sublime confidence which most people repose in their medical adviser is often the most magic medicine, and this reliance cannot be shaken more severely than by any grounds for mistrusting his assertions. After all, however, doctors must be allowed to use their own discretion, sometimes to withhold, sometimes to exceed the truth. As a general rule, nevertheless, I am inclined to agree with my correspondent that physicians are disposed to over-estimate the advantages of suppressing the facts of a case. Where a fatal termination to an attack is inevitable, or even probable, a sufferer and a sufferer's friends have a right to demand to know the truth, and it is a very mistaken respect for their feelings which induces some doctors to hold out hope where hope is over, or to disguise the gravity of the situation.

"Is it possible," asks a correspondent, "that lions and eagles and vultures were really eaten in English restaurants two generations ago?"———I should not care to undertake to say what is eaten in English restaurants at the present day, and much less what was a hundred years ago, if, as I suppose, curries and Vienna steaks were then in vogue. It would seem, however, that in the days when the sale of game was illegal, partridges were set down in the bill of fare as "eagles," pheasants as "vultures," and hares as "lions," which probably explains this extraordinary question, coming, as I presume it does, from the pen of an individual who is more or less sane.

F. A. S.—It is perfectly true that snakes will never pass over hair ropes.

*Apropos* of a recent paragraph on the number of cats in the country, ASTOR writes:

It may interest your readers to know that when cats were first imported, stringent laws were passed for the punishment of persons who killed or stole them. The feline pets of the Royal Family were specially protected, and if anyone interfered with one of the mousers that guarded a prince's granary he was compelled to pay a fine of as much wheat as would cover the cat when hung up by the tail with its head touching the floor.

THE world is not easily satisfied. A correspondent has now written demanding the abolition of the cover on *P.W.*, because he finds that he can read the first page of a paper without a wrapper for nothing when displayed on the bookstall. The number of readers who prefer to read the paper without paying anything is so great that I really ought to consider their wishes, but I am afraid I must draw the line somewhere. An editor is a man who likes to be taken in without being humbugged.

S. D. F.—Your manuscript was excellent. The handwriting as a matter of fact, was illegible, but that is a mere trifle. The chief point is that the office fire has never burned up so well before.

SINCE *Pearson's Weekly* was first started, bachelors have been selfish enough to grumble at one page being devoted to the ladies, and, although some of them have married and seen the advantage of this policy, the greater number appear inconsolable. It was difficult to pacify them in the first place, but since the appearance of *Home Notes* paper their indignation knows no bounds. With one voice they have demanded the abolition of the Page More Particularly for Ladies, and now a correspondent, who conceals his identity under the pseudonym GLOBE, even goes so far as to maintain that ladies ought to be content with a paper of their own, and to suggest that the page which has been appropriated for recipes and other mysterious feminine matters should now be headed: "Club Notes: A Page More Particularly for Gentlemen." Here he suggests might be discussed matters of masculine attire, occupation, and amusement. Some day, perhaps, I may find room for a special feature to concern the sterner sex, but certainly not as GLOBE ungallantly proposes, by depriving the ladies of their favourite page.

A. H. S.—How to become a humourist? Nothing could be more simple. Write a serious paragraph, and, at the end, put in brackets "*No joke intended.*" All the world will then go to work to find out where the joke is, and when they have dug up a dozen or two you can select the best as your own and hint that the others were all part of the design. This is exclusive information, of course.

A CORRESPONDENT writes:

The enterprise of the journalistic world in these days is almost incredible. It is not generally known, for instance, that a London evening paper offered a large sum, £50 or more, to the first person who should telegraph from Chelmsford the result of the recent trial of the miscreant Read for murder. Three men went into partnership over the business. One was stationed inside the Shire Hall, another in the square outside, while a third patrolled the pavement in front of the Post Office. By a series of signs the verdict was flashed from one to the other, and the papers giving the result were actually falling from the machines before the barrister had descended the steps to convey the official news to the Royal Mail cart waiting outside.

S. K. K. asks, Do giants or dwarfs predominate in the world at the present time?———It certainly appears from available statistics that the birth of undersized children is of more frequent occurrence than that of boys and girls who are abnormally developed. In fact, there are very few men living at the present time, from one end of the world to the other, who are really entitled to be called giants, while dwarfs may be met with in almost every centre of population.

BONDONE.—The ginseng referred to is a root highly esteemed in China as a medicine, and almost universally regarded in the East as possessing most extraordinary virtues, and as a remedy for every disease under the sun, except, perhaps, housemaid's knee. This may be superstition or it may not. At all events, it is not for me to decide. Western practitioners, however, have entirely failed either to explain or confirm the miracles which the root is said to work. The ginseng of Corea, by the way, is more valued than any other, and its cultivation is one of the most important industries of the peninsular, where the natives look upon the root as an elixir of life. A specimen of the wild plant, I am told, often sells for twenty times its weight in silver among Chinese dealers.

V. K. D. asks: Why do we so seldom hear of members of the Bar being engaged in a law suit———It is obvious, I think, that anyone with a thorough knowledge of the law is not so likely to commit offence as other people. Barristers, moreover, know the cost of litigation.

EVIDENTLY we have not got at the bottom of the matter yet! In August, 1890, the C Manœuvre Fleet signalled with search lights to colliers seventy miles away. This was some 500 miles south of the Azores, and on a fairly clear night; and the information comes from Mr. F. T. Jane, the artist who was on board at the time.

F. B. J. writes:

Referring to the discovery of natural coke at Tacoma, I was shown a sample of it whilst on a visit to Bulli, a small colliery district situated on the coast of New South Wales, about forty miles from Sydney. A mining engineer in charge of the works there informed me that in all probability cinderisation was the result of seismic action at some remote period. Three times greater heat is generated from it than from the artificial product, and being much more solid it is heavier. Strange to say, this fuel has been manufactured in the immediate neighbourhood for some considerable time at a loss.

V. ASP.—In Eastern Bengal, near the Kasia Hills, a will cannot be made in favour of a man, and property only descends through the women.

MELAN.—Gnats occasionally swarm together in such numbers that they present the appearance of a dense cloud of smoke. Possibly it was some natural phenomenon of this kind which deceived you, but at all events the captain of the fire brigade was quite justified in the course he took after coming seven miles along almost impassable country lanes on a false alarm. As there was no fire to extinguish, perhaps he thought that the least he could do was to put you out, but this, of course, is merely conjecture. In Salisbury, in the year 1736, the story goes, a serious alarm of fire was raised in the same way from the appearance of a vast column of gnats swarming round the cathedral spire.

ACCRA.—Gold-beating is a very ancient art, and has been practised from a remote period among Oriental nations. If you want more exact information you must interrogate the spooks, as no living person can enlighten you. It is carried on at the present time in most of the large towns of the United Kingdom, but London is the chief centre of the trade. 282,000 of the ordinary leaves placed in a little heap would only measure one inch in height, and one grain of gold, beaten to the usual thickness, covers fifty-six square inches.

B. C. V.—The word catchpoll, meaning a sheriffs' officer or bailiff who had power to arrest, is derived from *catch* and *poll*, "head," and not, as is suggested by the spelling, *catchpole*, from *pole*. In some parts, however, a long pole was in use for catching and holding criminals by the neck. This had an iron collar at the end with a V-shaped opening occasionally armed with spikes on the inside.

M. D. S. asks, Why are matrons who act as guides and protectors to ladies at public entertainments called chaperons?———This is rather a delicate point. Chaperons are really the devices which are placed over the horses' heads at pompous funerals, and it would be hardly fair to draw any conclusions from this. The name, however, is also applied to the cap or hood worn by Knights of the Garter, and I suppose as these austere females once wore the same headgear, the word seemed not altogether inappropriate.

T. A. R.—Ladies have never been allowed to represent a constituency in the House of Commons, although they have been returned to Parliament more than once. This is a very sensible arrangement. Ladies are so flighty that they would never be able to keep their seats for long, even if they were admitted. *No joke intended.*

IN addition to the sum of £27 4s. 4½d. which has already been acknowledged, the following amounts have come to hand towards next year's Fresh Air Fund:—

The Sergeants' Mess, Shoeburyness, 13s.; G. Trayhurn, H.M.S. *Wal*, 17s. 6d.; Miss Parry, 10s.; Winifred Adshead, 6s. 6d.; Alice Tipler, [illegible]; Sydney and Elsie Booth, 6s. 6d.; Collegian, 2s. 6d.; A Few Friends, 7s. 6d.; Frau Pastor Linde, 6d.; H. M., 5s.; Bricklayers' Society of Johannesbu, per T. W. Parsons, £7; A. B. R. (Assam), £1.

**Grand Total . . . £39 1s. 6½d.**

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# A Bride's Madness.

BY ALLEN UPWARD.

Author of "The Queen against Owen," &c., &c.

## PROLOGUE.

### The Closed Saloon.

It was nearly eleven o'clock at night, and the express in connection with the West of England through service was running into Glasgow.

The Central Station was brilliantly lighted, and an expectant throng of porters lined the platform as the train came rattling and rushing on along the burnished lines of steel, and drew up with a skilfully-graduated shock.

The train seemed to be composed of the same number of carriages as usual, but in the centre a saloon compartment was observed, on the outside of which was affixed a white label bearing the word "Reserved."

This compartment appeared to be lighted within, but the curtains were closely drawn across the windows, and when the express came to a standstill no movement in the shape of opening the door or unclosing the curtains gave indication of the presence of passengers inside.

Apparently the saloon was deserted.

But when the occupants of the other carriages had taken their luggage there still remained two large basket trunks and a leather portmanteau of dimensions too great to admit of its being carried by the owner.

At this moment the guard of the express came bustling along, accompanied by the night inspector of the station.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Whose things are these?"

One of the porters bent down and read out the name on the portmanteau.

"What! Have they gone off without them?" cried the astonished guard. And he turned hastily, and walked along the train in the direction of the reserved saloon.

The guard was puzzled. He turned in some perturbation to the inspector.

"I haven't seen anything of them since we left Preston," he said. "It's a gentleman and a lady; a beautiful girl she was, too. I think they're on their honeymoon. At Preston the gentleman came to the door and asked me to get him a bottle of brandy. That was the last I saw of them."

By this time the two men in front had arrived before the door of the compartment. The guard raised his hand and tapped on the glass. But there was no response from within.

Glancing anxiously at his companion, the guard rapped again more loudly, and then, as the inmates of the saloon still made no sign, he laid his grasp on the handle of the door and wrenched it open.

The inspector bent forward eagerly beside him, and they both looked in.

The first glance revealed nothing to confirm or to dispel their apprehensions. The furniture of the crariage displayed no particular signs of disturbance The only disquieting fact was the total absence of all signs of occupancy.

"What has become of them?" murmured the guard, as he stood stupidly staring in at the open door.

The inspector impatiently brushed past him and entered the saloon. He turned to that end of the compartment which had been out of sight from his former position on the platform, and was at once rewarded by a partially reassuring, though at the same time somewhat revolting sight.

One, at least, of the two passengers who had occupied the reserved saloon was still there, and in a situation which accounted for his failure to perceive the arrival of the train at its destination. The person whom the inspector saw before him—a man apparently in the prime of life, and dressed in a travelling suit of the best and most fashionable kind—lay stretched out on a couch in the corner of the saloon farthest from the door, breathing heavily in the deep sleep produced by intoxication. The swollen, unhealthy face, stained with purple blotches, and the helpless disorder which marked the sleeper's attire, were sufficient, without the presence of the empty spirit-flask on the floor below him, to show the nature of the slumber which had overtaken him. The inspector turned round to the guard, who had by this time followed him into the carriage, and pointed to the sleeping object with a sign of mute disgust.

"That is the gentleman," said the guard, nodding his head as if the sight had partly dispelled his anxiety. "Seems to have had about enough, doesn't he? But where is his wife?"

The inspector answered only by a significant look round the compartment.

It was empty.

The guard, beginning to feel a renewal of his alarm, strode to the side of the sleeper, and shook him roughly. The drunkard slowly roused himself, and stared at his disturbers with heavy, bloodshot eyes.

"What's the matter?" he ejaculated, speaking in a voice still thick from the effects of the debauch, which he had not entirely slept off. "Is this Glasgow?"

"Yes," answered the guard, sharply, "it is, and we want to know what has become of the young lady who was travelling with you?"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when they were answered by a low moan which caused his comrade and himself to start violently, and turn their eyes simultaneously to a narrow door in the end of the saloon, which gave admission to a smaller compartment used as a dressing-room.

The partially aroused drunkard followed the direction of their eyes, and heard a second feeble moan issue from the inner compartment. The effect seemed to be to almost instantly sober him.

"A very distressing thing has happened," he said, rising unaided to his feet, and speaking in tones which, though still husky, were fairly distinct. "It has completely upset me, and made me ill as you see. The excitement she has passed through lately has been too much for my poor wife. I have reason to fear that she has gone out of her mind."

## CHAPTER I.

### A Strange Accident.

An unusual excitement brooded over the village of Haughton. The inhabitants moved about with an air of subdued mystery, and shook their heads, and cast meaning glances at each other as they passed; or else they gathered in little knots of two or three at corners, and indulged in conversation carried on in a key scarcely above a whisper. The close stillness of a warm afternoon in September lay upon the country, and added to the general disinclination to work.

As time went on, the groups of people which had been scattered along the length of the main street of the village, or town, as the inhabitants preferred to consider it, showed a tendency to drift together, and collect round the doors of the principal hostelry of the place, the "Polar Bear." Here the attraction which had brought them so far began to act at an accelerated ratio, and the male portion of the crowd commenced to stream in ever-increasing numbers between the wide-open portals of the inn, and disappear into the interior. Once inside, the majority made their way to a large room situated on the first floor of the building, and known as the ball-room, owing to its having been originally built, at a time when Haughton was more flourishing than it had been of late years, for the purposes of those assemblies which formed an important feature of provincial life in the earlier part of the century.

It was drawing on to the hour of half-past two. The jury had collected; where was the coroner?

Five minutes after the half-hour had struck from the tower of Haughton Church, he appeared, issuing majestic from an inner room in the hotel. His manner was grave, decorous, but not unduly sombre. He carried his responsibility with dignity; his composed cheerfulness augured well for the issue of the proceedings.

One by one the twelve jurymen, some of them still retaining in their hands the blue official document which had commanded their attendance, detached themselves from their envious friends and neighbours, and formed a species of train behind the coroner as he marched upstairs into the crowded ball-room. Their appearance at the door was the signal for a subdued murmur from the assemblage within.

The ceremony of swearing in the twelve men was followed attentively by the audience. Then the coroner again rose. An expression of becoming gloom diffused itself over his features. He was taking out his jury to view the body.

While they were out on this errand the door of the room from which the coroner had emerged before again opened, and two gentlemen dressed in suitably grave attire came out and made their way upstairs in turn.

Their entrance into the room where the inquiry was being held caused a fresh sensation. But this time the crowd was more subdued. The looks cast at them were tinged with respect and deference. In the midst of a dead silence they walked up the room and took their places at the table on the side opposite to that assigned to the jury. There they awaited the coroner's return.

It was not long delayed. A brief inspection had been sufficient to satisfy the curiosity of the twelve. There on a couch extemporised in an outbuilding of the hotel lay the body, which most of them were able to recognise as that of James Burlston, head gamekeeper during several years to Sir Arthur Redleigh, of Haughton Court, Stalneshire. It was in the service of that gentleman that he had met his death a day or two before, and Sir Arthur himself was one of the two gentlemen who were waiting upstairs to give their evidence as to how the calamity occurred.

The immediate cause of death was evident enough. The lower part of the head behind had been shattered by a discharge of shot, some of which were still visible round the edges of the wound. The question of how those shots came to be fired with such disastrous effect was the only one which remained for the jury to decide.

Subdued in spite of themselves by the sight they had witnessed, they followed the coroner back into the ball-room, and the inquiry at once commenced by the calling of the principal witness.

It was at this juncture that an incident occurred which took everybody by surprise.

A cloud of dust was seen approaching along the Fatheringham Road, while behind the cloud rang the clatter of hoofs and wheels. As it drew near, a well-appointed carriage and pair emerged into sight, and drove at a smart pace up to the very door of the "Polar Bear," scattering the congregated on-lookers before it, and nearly overturning some of the more enthusiastic who failed to tear themselves away in sufficient time. A footman in livery jumped down from the box and opened the carriage door for an elderly man, bent more with care, perhaps, than with age, who slowly alighted and disappeared inside the hotel.

The arrival was recognised by the crowd as being no less an apparition than the Earl of Fatheringham in person, and loud was the buzz of curiosity and astonishment which instantly arose. What had brought the Earl to such a scene as this? He was no friend of Sir Arthur's, of that they were sure; no, nor of anyone else, for that matter. He was a relation of Mr. Grosse, they knew; but then what had Mr. Grosse to do with it beyond being there when it happened? And then the Earl was so reserved and haughty, never going anywhere hardly. Of all men in the world likely to come gaping at an inquest they would have taken their gospel oaths that the Earl was the last. Yet here he was, account for it how you would.

Lord Fatheringham certainly did not stop to satisfy the pangs of inquisitiveness he had excited. He proceeded straight to where the court was being held. With that effortless assurance which a man must have been a lord all his life to practice with success, he walked up the packed ball-room, the crowd parting before him. The jury had just settled down into their seats, and the first witness was commencing to give his evidence. As the Earl suddenly came upon the scene, Sir Arthur Redleigh—for it was he who had just been sworn—stopped short in the middle of a sentence, changed colour, and hesitated for some moments before he took up his narrative again.

But the nobleman did not appear to notice this curious embarrassment. With a slight formal bow to the coroner, who had half risen at his entrance, Lord Fatheringham dropped into the chair which the police-inspector hastened to clear for him. Half closing his eyes, and resting his chin upon his hands, which were supported in turn by a thick, old-fashioned cane, the Earl seemed to be resigning himself to be bored for the next hour.

Sir Arthur Redleigh pulled himself together, and went on with his evidence. He had plainly not reckoned on having such a listener. All the other members of the assemblage were either friends of his own or persons in a position which made them more or less dependent on the local magnate. And among them Sir Arthur seemed to enjoy a fair share of popularity, judging by the whispered remarks which went round. His appearance was that of a man who possessed the means to enjoy life, and who used them freely. A red complexion—rather too red for good health—and eyes of an uncertain colour were united with reddish hair and thick lips. At the present juncture both eye and hand were a little unsteady, and suggested that the baronet had been preparing himself for the ordeal by ways which are the ways of vanity.

However, there was ample excuse for any agitation which he displayed in his present position. For, as everyone there knew, it was his hand—of course, his unwitting hand—which had caused the death of the unfortunate keeper, and the task now before him was that of describing the catastrophe.

Fortunately, he had a sympathetic coroner and a jury not of that vicious, self-assertive disposition which leads some juries to pry and interfere when some little aristocratic trouble is being nicely hushed up by a well-bred coroner. They listened respectfully while he described the circumstances. He had invited his neighbour, Mr. Grosse, of Broadmead, to shoot with him on the fourth of the month. Deceased had accompanied them, as he usually did, and a boy to carry bags completed the party. The boy's name was Martin, and it was announced, in answer to a question, that he was present, and would give his evidence presently. The evidence went on——

"The birds had been rather scarce, and Mr. Grosse suggested that Burlston should go on to a small plantation in front, and see if he could drive out a few. He started off, and just when he had got twenty or thirty yards ahead the accident occurred. I can't really say how it occurred. I only remember shifting the position of my gun so as to be ready for the first bird that offered, and I fingered the trigger carelessly, I'm afraid. When I was least expecting it one barrel suddenly went off, and I heard Mr. Grosse say, 'You've hit Burlston!' and I looked, and there he was on the ground."

This was really all there was to tell. Except that they had all three rushed up to the fallen man, that they had found life extinct, and that Mr. Grosse and the witness had at once gone on for medical assistance, leaving Martin to watch the dead body. A groom had been promptly despatched for Dr. Druscott, who arrived within an hour, but who, of course, could be of no service. That was all, except that he (Sir Arthur) wished to publicly express his deep regret and concern for what had occurred. The deceased enjoyed his confidence and regard, and it was his intention to see that his widow in no way suffered, so far as money was concerned, by the sad event.

Everyone felt that this was most satisfactory, and even handsome. If there were any persons in the room disposed to complain that "they gentlefolks seemed to think as how they could take a poor man's life like a dumb brute's, as long as they paid for it"—if there were any such they discreetly kept their sentiments concealed till they got outside. The general feeling was voiced by Mr. Steercross, the coroner:

"Thank you, Sir Arthur. I am sure the court is indebted to you for the full and clear account you have given us. No one could do more than you have, and you may rest assured of enjoying the public sympathy in your painful position."

A slight murmur of approval followed this speech, and then the next name was called:

"William Sketchover Grosse."

Mr. Grosse, a dignified, elderly man, with black hair turning towards grey, and a fixed hard look in his eye, rose from his seat beside Sir Arthur, and proceeded to give his evidence with a coolness and ease which contrasted favourably with the disturbed manner of the previous witness. But in no other respect did he differ from him in his account of the transaction, and the public began to yawn and wonder how much longer the proceedings were going to last. No wonder, they thought, that the Earl of Fatheringham looked half asleep, and barely showed by the lifting of an eyelid that he was aware of Mr. Grosse's entering or leaving the witness-stand.

The boy Martin succeeded. His manner of giving evidence, as the coroner was obliged pointedly to remark, reflected little credit on the era of Board Schools. Tell a connected story he could not, and everything he said had literally to be dragged out of him by the exasperated court.

Substantially his story was but a repetition of that already told twice. He had heard Mr. Grosse say there might be birds in the plantation—"boords" the boy called them. "An' then a told keaper to go forrard an' beat un, an' keaper a starts to go on, and all of a suddent I heers a bang an' looks round, and there was keaper lying' on ta groond as if a weer shot, an' Muster Grosse calls out—'You've hit un!'"

"Yes," said the Coroner, "and what next?"

"Whoy, a was killed," retorted the boy.

"Yes, but what did you do when you saw him fall?"

"I runned oop to un, to be sure."

"And you found life extinct?"

"Na, sir; I didn't find no life at all. A weer dead."

"Yes, yes; that's what I mean. And the others—the two gentlemen, what did they do?"

"Oh, they runned up, too, an' S'Rathur looks skeered like, and Muster Grosse a says to un—'How on earth could you be so clumsy, Redleigh?' an' a says, 'Why the—'"

"There, that'll do," said the Coroner, interrupting hastily, "we don't want all that, you know. How far do you say he had gone when you saw him fall?"

"Oh, nobbut aboot's far off as ta window," answered the witness, glancing at it as he spoke.

The coroner followed the direction of his eyes. The window was about 18 feet from where the witness was standing.

"Ah, a slight discrepancy as to distance, but I don't see that it has any bearing on the case," remarked the Coroner to the jury.

Martin was then dismissed, and the doctor called.

During the time which had elapsed since he entered the room, Lord Fatheringham had only once raised his head from its resting-place on his hands. That was when the boy made his reference to the window, and then the earl looked up, and swiftly measured the distance with his eyes. But the next moment his lordship had lapsed into his former attitude of indifference, and he did not raise his head, though a slight movement of his frame was perceptible when Dr. Druscott's name was pronounced.

On the present occasion Dr. Druscott had very little to say. For a professional man he said it very intelligibly. He had seen the body of deceased about an hour after the extinction of life. He found the base of the skull had been fractured by a large number of shot, which must have caused death to supervene immediately. He had extracted a few of the pellets to show the jury. (Shots produced.)

Towards the end of the doctor's statement the Earl of Fatheringham was observed to move for the second time since his arrival. What was the curiosity of the spectators when they saw his lordship take out a pocket-book and commence to scribble rapidly in it with a gold pencil. All eyes followed him as he put up the pencil-case, tore the leaf out of his book, and folded it up in his hand. He held it like that for a moment, and then just as Dr. Druscott was about retiring, the Earl leant forward and handed his note to the coroner, who was seated on the next chair but one to his own.

That gentleman gave a clumsy start as he received the mysterious missive, then he opened it and read with knitted brows. Next looking up with a slightly supercilious air, but at the same time as if constrained by a superior influence, he said:

"One moment, doctor. Before you go, can you tell us whether you were able, from the spread of the shot or any other indications, to form an opinion as to the distance at which the deceased must have been struck?"

"Yes," the doctor readily responded. "Judging from the nature of the wound, the skull must have been struck by a bunch of shot in one place, and by a few scattered pellets. I should say the distance from the barrel of the gun must have been about six paces."

"Thank you," said the Coroner. "I don't see that anything turns on it, but as there seems to be a slight difference of opinion as to the distance, it is no doubt as well to have it settled. I suppose you would say decidedly that the distance could not have been twenty yards, as two of the witnesses seemed to think?"

"I think I would," replied the doctor. "At such a distance as that I should expect the charge to have scattered much more, and probably no fatal wound would have been inflicted."

"Quite so. Thank you, that will do."

And all the evidence having now been given, the coroner turned to the jury and commenced his charge.

"Well, gentlemen, this seems to be a very simple case, and the facts are all before you. Sir Arthur Redleigh, a gentleman who is held in universal esteem in this neighbourhood, and whose feelings as expressed here to-day do him the greatest credit, went out shooting on the fourth of the month, along with Mr. Grosse, a gentleman equally well-known and respected. The deceased, an old servant of Sir Arthur's, and who enjoyed his master's confidence and friendship, went with them on this occasion as on others, and they also took with them the boy Martin, about whose way of giving his evidence the less said the better."

The coroner went on in this strain till he came to the order to the keeper to go on in front, and then proceeded:

"Accordingly he stepped forward—was he carrying a gun himself at the time? He was; he was carrying his own gun in his hand, gentlemen. His own private property? His own? Oh, a present from you, sir? Ah! gentlemen, the gun he was carrying at the time was a present from his master, a circumstance which is valuable, not as testifying to the absence of any ill-will between Sir Arthur and the unfortunate man, because of anything of that sort there has not been and could not be the slightest suggestion; but as showing, gentlemen, the positive good-will, the friendly relations between master and servant which redound so much to the credit of our country, and help to make us the envy of other nations. And I am sure it must be a consolation to the gentleman who finds himself, through no fault of his own, in a position which we all deplore, to reflect that such kindly relations subsisted between himself and the poor fellow of whose death he was the unwilling cause."

Here the speaker paused to drink in the subdued murmur of applause which had been gathering head during these felicitous observations.

"Hush, gentlemen!" he said, as soon as it had died away. "Remember the occasion on which we are come together. As I was saying, the deceased advanced about six paces—for I suppose we may consider that question settled by the doctor's evidence; not, as I said before, that it is of any real consequence one way or the other"—here he glanced towards Lord Fatheringham, who was fast assuming the appearance of slumber—"when, as all the witnesses concur in saying—and, in fact, the evidence throughout has been of an absolutely non-conflicting character, which will save you from any trouble in coming to your decision—the gun went off with the result of which you are aware.

"Now, gentlemen, it is, of course, for you to say, and I am sure I am heartily glad that the responsibility rests upon your heads and not on mine—to say whether the deceased died from the effects of that accidental shot, or whether he did not. But I need hardly point out to you that no other alternative has been ever suggested, and Sir Arthur Redleigh, with a candour which I am sure you know how to appreciate, has himself accepted the theory that his hand—his innocent and involuntary hand—was the cause of death. That being so, I have not thought it necessary to call any evidence to identify the shot found in the wound with that used by him, and if, under the circumstances, you feel justified in returning the customary verdict in such cases of 'Death by misadventure,' I shall be happy to put it into writing."

The jury promptly gave the finding suggested. At a whispered hint from the coroner their foreman added that no blame whatever was, in their opinion, to be attached to the baronet, whose whole conduct from first to last did him the highest honour. And as the foreman was a flourishing butcher, who enjoyed the regular patronage of Haughton Court, there could be no doubt as to the sincerity of his sentiments.

And Lord Fatheringham? What did he think of the verdict?

Impassive as ever, he had waited till the conclusion of the proceedings, and then, when everybody was preparing to go, the Earl also rose, unclosing his eyes apparently with some effort, and with another faint recognition of the coroner moved down the room.

The people made way for his lordship with great deference, but, with one exception, no one ventured to offer any greeting to the haughty nobleman. The exception was Mr. Grosse. As Lord Fatheringham neared the door the other stepped out in front of him and half extended his hand with a commonplace remark.

The Earl gave him a stern look, and a nod that was quite free from any touch of friendliness. The look and nod together seemed to convey the meaning—"Yes, I see you, and the sight is not a particularly welcome one." Then he passed through the door.

Mr. Grosse turned to Sir Arthur Redleigh, who was by his side, and complained—

"You see, Redleigh. If you didn't know that I was his nearest relation and heir, you would think we were perfect strangers."

Meanwhile the solitary nobleman proceeded to his carriage, and, entering it, gave the order to drive back to Fatheringham Towers. The door closed behind him, the footman sprang to his place, and the carriage rolled off as rapidly as it had come, rousing anew the wondering comments of the crowd streaming forth from the portals of the "Polar Bear."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE EARL OF FATHERINGHAM.

FATHERINGHAM TOWERS was a magnificent and historic mansion, lying rather nearer to Haughton than to the village from which its owner derived his title—a village up to twenty years ago, but now a thriving seaside resort, with bathing machines, paved promenades, band stands, niggers, and all the other features of civilisation.

As soon as the Earl reached home, after his appearance at the coroner's inquiry, he strode at a quick pace into the library, and sat down before his desk. Drawing a sheet of paper towards him, he indited a long letter, of which the following was the most important passage:—

"Send to Scotland Yard at once, or go yourself if possible, and get the very best man they have got. Tell him to come down here disguised immediately. He must lose no time, and, of course, spare no expense. Money absolutely *ad lib.*"

The moment the letter was finished he sealed it up and rang the bell. Before another quarter of an hour had elapsed it was on its way to the family solicitor in Theobald Street, W.C.

Without prying into the recesses of his mind, let us see what kind of man in the popular estimation was James, fourth Earl of Fatheringham.

To begin with, he was a childless widower. His wife had died so many years ago that he had had ample time to recover from her loss. But there were no rumours of his ever having contemplated any successor, though, up to three years before, he had gone freely into society, and more than one beautiful girl had been distinguished by his attentions. At the period referred to, however, he lost his only child and heir, Lord East, and to the grief attendant on this loss, public opinion ascribed the morose seclusion in which Lord Fatheringham had since lived.

The circumstances of his son's death were indeed peculiarly painful. After living for a few years in the wildest excesses, he had come home, at the age of twenty-four, a victim to manifold diseases, of which *delirium tremens* was said to have been the most immediately instrumental in his fate. The end was not long in coming. He had died at last after so brief a seizure that the London celebrity summoned to Dr. Druscott's assistance only arrived in time to witness the last agonies.

It was while the horror of this event was fresh that the Earl's only remaining kinsman, Mr. Grosse, had contrived to give him mortal offence. For that gentleman his lordship had all his life entertained a profound indifference, but it was now turned into positive repugnance. The squire of Broadmead had paid a visit of condolence after the death of Lord East. This was only natural and respectful, but in the course of the call Mr. Grosse had had the bad taste to allude to the fact that he now stood next in succession to the title.

The Earl, roused out of his grief into superlative indignation, instantly rose and quitted the room. Nor from that day on had he ever condescended to notice his presumptive heir's existence.

But his eccentricity passed almost unnoticed among the others which had grown upon him during the past few years. He had become recognised as a deliberate misanthrope, an active one, too, who went out of his way to parade his disregard for others. His quarrel with the great Duke of Instaple was an oft-quoted specimen of this disposition of his. He happened to be the patron of the living in the parish which contains Turfe, the Duke's Stalneshire seat, and he took advantage of a vacancy to present a cleric of the most pronounced evangelical type; so that the magnificent owner of Turfe, coming to his parish church as usual, found himself sitting under ministrations at which his Grace, who was the chief prop and mainstay among the laity of what is known as Ritualism, and hand-in-glove with half-a-dozen bishops of that way of thinking in consequence, naturally felt some indignation. His Grace had never allowed anyone under a Prince of the Blood to contradict him in his life, and he now showed his spirit by building a miniature abbey on his estate, and installing a little Brotherhood of his own, who infected the adjacent town of Fatheringham with their own peculiar views.

Although Lord Fatheringham had thus made enemies in all directions, he had the consolation of knowing that he had been proclaimed a hero in Low Church circles over his defiance to the great High Church duke. One inevitable result of this popularity was the liability to appeals of all kinds from those who thought the Earl shared their views. Accordingly he was not surprised when the next day but one to that of the inquest, a servant came to him with a card bearing this legend:—

"REV. A. COPINGSTONE, *Society for the Maintenance of Protestant Principles in the Church of England.*"

Although the Earl had barely finished breakfast he did not care to deny himself to the visitor, but got up and made his way to the room into which the reverend gentleman had been shown.

Lord Fatheringham found himself in the presence of a shortish, square-built man, dressed in a way that seemed to tone down a good deal of natural energy and vivacity. He appeared to be dark, with black beard and whiskers. His eyelids drooped, and he spoke with a drawl which contrasted rather curiously with the alertness with which he arose at the Earl's entrance.

On his part the visitor could perceive a bent, grey-haired man with a morose expression, and a manner that only intense pride restrained from being querulous and rude.

The Earl was the first to speak.

"Sit down, sir. You wish to see me?" he began.

"Am I speaking to Lord Fatheringham?" was the cautious response.

The nobleman bowed.

"Then I may say at once that my name is Wright, and I am the detective whose services your lordship requires. I have a letter of introduction from Mr. Sidebottom."

Saying this in the same drawl that he had used in his first words, he handed the Earl a letter from the solicitor. Lord Fatheringham opened it, and read—

> MY LORD,—I am in receipt of your lordship's instructions, and I have succeeded in obtaining the services of the bearer, one of the most astute, and certainly one of the most energetic, of the whole force. Leaving him to go into the matter fully with your lordship, I have the honour to be, your lordship's obedient servant,
>
> W. J. SIDEBOTTOM.

Having glanced through his note the Earl looked up and carefully examined the countenance of the man before him.

"Ah, I see," he remarked. "I asked you to come disguised, and you have taken me at my word. I must compliment you on your make-up. But now I know who you are, you can resume your natural voice."

The Rev. A. Copingstone gave a faint smile.

"I have no natural voice—that is to say, I have succeeded in eradicating it. Your lordship sees," he went on in answer to the other's questioning glance, "men in my profession are at all times liable to sudden surprises and slips from the character we have assumed, and the great art of the detective, I consider, is to guard against any such self-betrayal. Now, it long ago occurred to me that the safest and simplest plan of all would be to have no self to betray. In other words, I have long made it a rule to be always acting a part of some kind or other. Even when I am asleep, I sleep in character, so to speak. I have no fixed name even. At the Yard they know me as Wright, at my present lodgings I am Brown, at my last I was Wilkinson. I choose common names, you see, in order to accustom my ear to hearing any named pronounced suddenly without embarrassment. I have, in fact, quite a list of names, and dresses to go with them. But I am trespassing on your Lordship's time."

"Not at all. Far from it. I am quite interested in what you tell me," replied the Earl, not ill-pleased at this exhibition of the resources of the man to whom he was about to confide a vitally important trust.

The detective bowed low. His listener's complaisance encouraged him to launch into anecdote.

"I have been Copingstone several times before. It was as Copingstone that I took the notorious Fleming—your lordship may remember the case—the cashier of the Provincial Bank, who went off with thirty thousand pounds to Perth, in South Australia."

Lord Fatheringham shook his head.

"Ah! Well, it was some time ago now. My only clues were a vague description of his appearance (it is astonishing how unable people are to give you a decent description of a man they have been seeing every day for years), and the fact that when at home he attended a Baptist chapel. I went out to Australia—we had some reason to think he had gone there—and started a preaching mission through the Colonies, of course as a Baptist. I went from town to town preaching in the Baptist chapels, and introducing into every sermon a pointed reference to the fugitive criminal. Well, I got to Perth and preached morning and evening in the principal chapel there. In the evening sermon, just as I was bringing out my stock allusion, I noticed a man in the front pew turning queer. I left the pulpit while they were taking the collection, slipped out through the vestry, and tore round to the front. I was just in time, and arrested my man as he came down the steps. How he would have liked to kill me, to be sure!"

"And do the—do your people at headquarters approve of your methods?" asked Lord Fatheringham, looking ever so slightly scandalised.

"No, they don't, my lord. They disapprove of them. But all the same when they've got a difficult thing in hand they send for me. When your application came in they knew better than to send down a blundering idiot, who would go making a dust right and left, and frightening the bird before it was caught. I understand that what your lordship wants is a secret inquiry into the circumstances connected with this Haughton tragedy?"

"That is so. I want you to go into the matter thoroughly, and sift it to the very bottom. I don't care how long you take—take the next year, if you like—and I don't care what money you spend; I give you *carte blanche.*"

Mr. Copingstone's eyes sparkled at this last phrase. He remarked:

"Before your lordship goes further—of course I understand generally that you are prepared to incur considerable expense—but people's ideas as to the meaning of *carte blanche* differ so much that I should be glad if your lordship would indicate some figure——"

The Earl interrupted him.

"What is your idea of the meaning of *carte blanche*, Mr. Wright?"

"Well, I suppose your lordship would be willing to go as far as, let us say, five hundred pounds?"

"I am willing to go as far as five thousand pounds," retorted the nobleman, "and if you succeed in the way I expect, it shall be the most profitable job you ever took in hand."

The detective's face mantled with smiles. He bowed his thanks, and then commenced to put a series of questions with reference to his task.

"I shall be glad of as much light as your lordship can give me," he said, "as from the newspaper reports it seemed to be a perfectly plain, above-board matter. What is it that your lordship suspects?"

For a moment the Earl hesitated, and fidgeted nervously with his hands. At length he answered:

"I do not believe in the verdict. I do not believe that the death of that man was the result of an accident."

The detective frowned and compressed his lips.

"Does your lordship mean that it was a case of manslaughter—that Sir Arthur Redleigh was guilty of some drunken freak in firing the fatal shot?"

"I mean something more," said Lord Fatheringham, casting a penetrating glance at his questioner.

"Murder?"

"Wilful murder."

There was a momentary pause at this grave crisis in the conversation. Though not unprepared for an accusation of this kind, the detective felt almost taken aback when it was set so nakedly before him. But he soon recovered his self-possession.

"And your lordship's reasons for the suspicion?"

"I have no reasons to give you beyond the evident falsehood told at the inquest with regard to the distance at which the man was shot."

"What! I beg your lordship's pardon; but surely there are some facts which are known to you on which you base your accusation?"

"There are no such facts. I know of nothing more than you have no doubt already seen in the reports of the inquest."

The Rev. Mr. Copingstone fairly fell back in his chair.

"But, my lord, I never heard of such a case! Surely you must have something in your mind to lead you up to this suspicion. To take the first question that arises in such a case as this, what was the motive for the crime, if it was one? Baronets do not go about shooting their keepers without any reason for doing so."

It was now Lord Fatheringham's turn to look disconcerted.

"That I cannot tell you," he responded. "I know of no motive which Redleigh had for removing that wretched man. I must leave it to you to seek out the motive. That is why I require your services. Had I had the knowledge you expect of me, I might have given evidence at the inquest, and had him arrested on the spot."

The Rev. Mr. Copingstone stared at his noble employer with some disquietude. Evidently there was more than one mystery in this case. Then, avoiding for a moment the delicate ground of Lord Fatheringham's interest, he sought for a little more general information.

"Well, my Lord, of course the task you set me becomes a very difficult one, but I must do what I can. I understand that you simply believe, without any particular grounds, that this affair was a murder, and that you wish me to find out, if I can, some motive, some secret connection between Sir Arthur and Burlston that might have prompted the crime?"

The Earl bowed in silence.

"Ah! Well, I suppose you don't happen to know whether Mrs. Burlston is a handsome woman?"

The Earl smiled and then sighed.

"No, she is not. I knew her a few years ago. In fact, she nursed my son in his last illness."

"Oh!" observed the detective, quietly, and then remained pondering for a minute. "About the other man, Mr. Grosse," he went on, presently, "can you tell me anything about him?"

"He is my third cousin," replied the Earl, drily, "and heir to the Earldom since my son's death, as he was good enough to remind me at the time. We are not now on speaking terms."

"Is he a truthful man?"

The peer shrugged his shoulders.

"Really I should be inclined to think he was. Liars generally have some tact. But I ought to say that I believe his character stands high in the county as a stern sort of well-educated man. Redleigh is a drunken blackguard, pure and simple."

It was impossible to mistake the angry intonation of the last words.

"Then you think it probable that Mr. Grosse was himself deceived by Sir Arthur?"

"I suppose so, though it is curious he should have agreed with him about the distance." And the Earl proceeded to explain his share in the proceedings at the inquest.

"Yes, I see that, of course," said the other. "The shorter the distance the more likely murder. But how about the boy?"

"Too stupid. You will get nothing out of him."

"And supposing Mr. Grosse had noticed anything, do you think his friendship for Redleigh would prevent his speaking out?"

"Well, I don't know that they are particularly friendly. I never heard they were, and, apart from being neighbours, I shouldn't think they had much in common. Grosse has a daughter, a very charming girl, I believe——but what am I thinking of? Of course Redleigh is married." And a frown settled on the Earl's features.

Mr. Copingstone pricked up his ears.

"Married, is he? Does your lordship know anything about his wife?"

The Earl shrank back as if the question were displeasing to him.

"She is in a lunatic asylum," he said, briefly. "But you will find plenty of people in the neighbourhood who will be able to tell you as much about Sir Arthur's affairs as I can."

This was a hint to the detective to cease his questionings. He dropped the subject of Lady Redleigh, but he could not bring himself to leave the Towers without adverting once more to a topic previously broached. Rising from his seat he thus addressed Lord Fatheringham:

"My lord, I will do my best, with such materials as I have got, to thrash out this affair to the bottom; and if there is anything in it beyond a mere accident, or possibly a drunken spree, rest assured I shall discover it. But your lordship must permit me to state that you are seriously handicapping me at the very start by concealing from me your own grounds for instituting this inquiry. I should be a fool, and very unfit for the task you assign me, if I did not see perfectly well that you have some motive—and some very strong motive—for the course you have taken. Were I in possession of that motive it might help to clear my way very materially. Of course I cannot press the point, but in fairness to myself I wish to draw your lordship's attention to this, so that if failure should wait upon my efforts I shall be absolved from blame."

The Earl listened to this appeal with some impatience. At its end he rose himself, and replied in a manner that put an end to the discussion.

"I cannot gratify you, sir. My motive for employing you to unearth what I suspect to have been a premeditated crime must remain a secret. I can only assure you that if you were in full possession of it it would not aid you in the slightest degree. I will even go farther and inform you of what you will respect as a sacred confidence—that there is a mortal antipathy on my part towards Sir Arthur Redleigh, of which he alone is aware, an antipathy arising from causes which have no connection with the present affair, and which it would not be of the least service to you to understand. It is sufficient that I believe him to be an unmitigated scoundrel, and I should esteem myself most fortunate if by lawful means I could rid the earth of such a man. Now you know all that is necessary, and if you value my confidence and esteem you will carefully refrain from seeking to know more."

Lord Fatheringham's voice, which had vibrated passion during a part of this speech, grew stern with menace at the close. The detective realised that he had gone as far as it was safe for him to venture, and at once took his departure.

Left to himself, the master of Fatheringham Towers sank down into his chair, and buried his face in his hand.

### CHAPTER III.

#### DIARY OF THE REV. A. COPINGSTONE.

For once I have got hold of a case which thoroughly puzzles me. In all my professional experience I never recollect anything quite like it before. As the investigation promises to be extremely interesting, I therefore intend to keep a full account of my progress, especially as Lord Fatheringham is paying me well, and I must give him value for his money in the shape of good long reports.

Little did I think, when the news of the Haughton tragedy, as they call it, reached London, that I should ever be engaged on the case. The whole thing seemed so simple that none of us thought it could possibly lead to anything. The utmost we expected was that it might turn out that the baronet was drunk, in which case, with an independent jury, there might have been a verdict of manslaughter.

As it was, when the report of the inquest came to hand, I thought it was all over; and I was never more surprised in my life than when I got the message to go down instantly in disguise to Fatheringham Towers, and place myself under his lordship's instructions.

Of course, I knew the Earl well by repute, and it didn't take me long to hit on the best way to present myself before him. But our interview fairly staggered me, I confess. Naturally, I thought he would have had some evidence to offer me, or at least some suggestion to make. But to calmly ask me to prove that Sir Arthur Redleigh was a murderer, without any sort of clue except the fact that he exaggerated the distance at which the keeper was when he was shot—a mistake which anyone might have fallen into—did seem about as strange an order as I have ever heard of.

The more I think of it the more difficult it is to understand what motive a man in the position of Sir Arthur Redleigh could possibly have for killing his own gamekeeper, a man who had been with him for years, and with whom he was apparently on the best of terms.

But there is another problem in the case more mysterious still, and that is why Lord Fatheringham should want to interfere at all. What connection can there be between him and Redleigh that he should be willing to spend thousands of pounds in trying to prove him a murderer? That is the puzzle I want explained, and I don't see my way to get at the bottom of it so long as his lordship refuses to give me any assistance.

Turning it over in my mind as I came away from the Towers, so far as I could see I had just three facts to go upon.

First, Sir Arthur Redleigh has admitted that he shot the gamekeeper;

Second, his companion at the time of the affair was a Mr. Grosse, who is the nearest relation of Lord Fatheringham, but whom his lordship doesn't seem to have much liking for;

Third, Mr. Grosse supported Sir Arthur's evidence at the inquest as to the keeper being twenty yards away instead of six.

Then there is one other point that may mean a good deal, and may mean nothing at all. Mrs. Burlston, the wife of the man who was shot, acted as nurse to Lord Fatheringham's son in the illness of which he died.

That is all, and I doubt if any detective ever started on a difficult case, with so little to guide him.

However, to come to the narrative of my own doings, my first step after leaving Lord Fatheringham was to make my way to Haughton, to see what information I could pick up about the man I have been engaged to run down. My clerical character appeared to me to be a very good one for this purpose, and I therefore thought I would pretend to be engaged in organising a public meeting, under the patronage of Lord Fatheringham, on behalf of the Society for the Maintenance of Protestant Principles in the Church of England.

Naturally the first point of attack was the rectory. I first ascertained that the incumbent was a man of leanings in the direction of the Society I was supposed to represent, and then at once made my way into his presence.

Mr. Brown—that was his name—was an oldish, shrivelled-up sort of man, not by any means prepossessing, and looking more like a broken-down man of the world than the ideal country parson. However, he received me civilly enough when he found I was not asking for subscriptions, and after telling him about the meeting, and that I expected Lord Fatheringham to preside, I said—

"I suppose we may reckon on your support as recter of the parish?"

"Oh, yes, certainly. Were it only to show my respect for Lord Fatheringham I should come."

"And now, perhaps, you can give me the names of a few leading gentry about who might be induced to come in?"

"Yes, by all means. Let me see. There is Mr. Grosse, the Earl's cousin. I've no doubt he would be glad to attend?"

"Mr. Grosse," I said, pretending to be struck by the name. "Ah, of course, the gentleman who was present at that fatal shooting accident?"

The rector nodded, but said nothing.

"Very curious affair that," I went on, determined to make him speak. "What sort of man is Mr. Grosse, then? Is he a supporter of Church organisations?"

"Yes, as a rule. He is one of our leading men in the district, in fact. Most of the gentry about here, I'm sorry to say, are rather a fast set, who take no interest whatever in anything except sport and that sort of thing."

"I see. And Sir Arthur Redleigh, now, the one that shot the keeper, it wouldn't be any good to go to him, I suppose?"

"No, I think not. Not the slightest."

"He's one of the fast set, I suppose? Drinks a good deal, doesn't he?"

Something in the doctor's voice had warned me that I was on dangerous ground, but I was little prepared for his reply to this last question.

"Sir Arthur Redleigh is my son-in-law," he said, and I thought I saw a suppressed pang agitate his features as he uttered the words.

Of course I was profuse in my apologies. I recollected all at once Lord Fatheringham's mentioning that Lady Redleigh was in an asylum, and I felt that I had unwittingly touched a sore. It was, of course, useless to pursue my inquiries in this quarter, so after a few general observations I took my departure.

As a rule, the parson of the parish is the best source to go to for high-class gossip—gossip about the gentry of a neighbourhood, that is. Failing him, one's next resort is the landlord of the principal inn. I at once made tracks for the Polar Bear.

Being a clergyman for the nonce, I could not very well go into the bar for a drink. But, luckily, I had a better tune to play. I asked to see the landlord, and started the pretext that I wanted to hire his room for the Protestant meeting.

He readily tumbled to the idea, and I soon had him in friendly conversation. We came round almost immediately to the recent inquest. He was an easy-going, loquacious fellow, and no doubt gave a good index to the public opinion of the place.

"Yes, sir," he said, in answer to one of my remarks, "it wasn't a nice business, there's no denying. It's all very well for gentlemen to say their guns go off by accident, and no doubt there's many that do, but there are different kinds of carelessness, and when a man goes out shooting in such a state that he can't hold his gun straight, and can't keep it from going off when there's a man right in front of him, why it's presuming a little too far, sir, and I don't wonder that people talk, and those Radicals down at the Lamb—for we've Radicals even in Haughton, more's the shame—they get saying that if it was a keeper had shot a gentleman, instead of the opposite, we should hear something more about it; though of course that's simply their low envy, and what I always say is that we oughtn't to judge hastily, and if we had nothing better to fill up our time and keep our minds off it, perhaps we should get fond of drink too. My dear,"—to a stout lady, who entered at that moment—"run and open a bottle of port. I daresay the reverend gentleman won't mind wetting his lips."

The reverend gentleman said that he would be only too happy.

"That's right, sir. I don't take anything as early as this as a regular rule, but once in a way of course is different, and what I always say is, 'Don't give way to it as a habit, feel that you can do without it if you like, and then it doesn't matter how much you take.'"

I expressed my admiration for this profound sentiment, as embodying the whole philosophy of the subject, and then led him back to our former topic, saying:

"Ah, didn't Sir Arthur have some trouble about his wife that may have led him to take to bad habits?"

Mine host shook his head.

"No, sir, I don't think that had much to do with it. I think he had been given that way pretty well before he ever saw Miss Brown. No, my experience is that men go wrong, not because of any particular temptation, but simply because their nature leads them to it. You may have one man with everything round him to keep him straight; you may bring him up in a Band of Hope, as they call 'em, and make him a Good Templar, and all that sort of thing, and yet before you know where you are that man's gone wrong; and you may have—thank you, dear,"—to the same lady as before, returning with the bottle,—"you may have—there, sir, taste that, and tell me whether you find any logwood in it!—you may have another,"—pausing to empty his glass, which he at once re-filled—"another who has lived in a hotel all his life, say, like myself, and yet never given way so that he can't check himself. Ready for another sip, sir?"

"Presently, thanks," I said, taking a few sips of what tasted uncommonly good. I don't know whether I said that we were in the landlord's private sitting-room.

"Well, I'll have another while you're waiting, just to show you that I'm not afraid of my own wine, sir,"—suiting the action to the word. "No, sir, it's a curious thing, that tendency to drink, and the same way some men give in to it. Now——"

I saw I must interrupt this flow of moralising if I wanted to get at any information, so I broke in:

"I haven't heard anything about this marriage you were telling me about, except that Lady Redleigh is now in an asylum. Do you know the circumstances?"

"Do I know them? Well, sir, I think the man that supplied the wedding-breakfast ought to know a little about it. Dear me, what a terrible thing that was. I wonder you never heard of it, but they managed to hush it up somehow, and keep it out of the papers. They do say that Binks—Binks is the man who supplies all the papers with news from this part—they say that he got a £100 note to keep it out of the press, but it's a wonder it didn't leak out somehow. Dear me, what a beautiful girl she was—the rector's daughter; she was the belle of this part of the county, and when she went to the Hunt Ball at Stalne the Duke of Instaple himself danced with her. They did gossip about her and Lord East, but I don't think there was anything in it, though it looked as if she might have had pretty well her choice of all the young men about. But Sir Arthur was the richest, I suppose, and the highest in rank that offered, and she accepted him, not very willingly either, they said; but old Brown was always as poor as a church mouse, and young Brown, her only brother, had got into some fearful scrape at the University, and wanted to go abroad, and Sir Arthur Redleigh offered to give him a cheque for a thousand pounds to start him. So between them they made her do it."

"Then didn't she like Sir Arthur Redleigh, or what?"

"Well, I do believe it was his character and habits that turned her against him, for he was known as a drinking—*now*, I think you are ready for another glass, sir? That's right!—a drinking man even then; not one of those who take just a little in a social way—I think I'll keep you company again, sir—but one of those who really like the drink for its own sake, and take it when there's no occasion, and we all know what that leads to. Why, his health had suffered from it for years before he married her, though he was once one of the strongest men in Stalneshire, not like me now; why, my constitution is so weak that I'm constantly getting laid up, however moderate I may be; but that man wrecked a really fine constitution entirely through drink, and no decent girl would have anything to say to him for long before he married Miss Brown."

"Dear me, what a sad thing. But what happened afterwards? How did she come to lose her reason?"

"Ah, that's the terrible part of it. No one knows the rights about that. All we in Haughton know is this—that they were married in the parish church by her father, they had the wedding breakfast, a splendid one it was, too, though I say it as shouldn't, and they set off by train for Scotland. Well, the next thing we heard was that a telegram had come for the rector the next morning to go off after them instantly, and he went, looking like a corpse, and afterwards a horrible rumour got abroad that the beautiful Laura Brown was a raving maniac, whose wedding night had been spent shrieking and raving, and only held back by straps and cords from doing some awful deed of violence."

I was aghast at this fearful story. It had no bearing that I could see on the mystery which it was my task to unravel, but yet I felt moved to intense interest in the tragedy.

"And what happened next? Did you ever find out anything more?"

"Never. It was supposed the madness must have been hereditary, though we never heard anything about it in the family before. They put her into an asylum, somewhere in Scotland, I rather think, but I'm not sure, and came back to Haughton, old Brown a perfect wreck of himself—I don't think he'll ever get over it—and Sir Arthur went to the usual consolation. Ah, it was a sad affair! Can't I tempt you again, sir?"

"Not just yet. And what has he been doing since? How long was that ago?"

"About three years. It was just before Lord East's death, I recollect, or just after. What's he been doing? You can guess that, sir." And by way of assisting me he raised his glass to his lips, and then, finding it was empty, set it down hastily and re-filled it.

"Yes, I'm sorry for Sir Arthur. Of course everybody sympathised with him at the time, but you know, sir, that's no excuse for becoming—is this my second glass, or my third? My fourth? Bless my soul, we must have up another bottle—for becoming a habitual—unless you'd prefer the least modicum of spirits or liqueur to finish off with? I always find brandy sits best on port with me. No? Sure, sir?—habitual toper, one of those who can't do without it when they want to. My dear!"—calling to the lady, who was heard approaching—"No, sir; when a man gets into that stage—ah, here you are! Just fetch me a brandy, not too strong. You're quite sure you won't? Very well.—Yes, and when it comes to regular dram-drinking, as it has with Sir Arthur, spirits at all hours of the day, you know, and not in a casual way like this, but day after day, you know— (Re-enter the lady with brandy and water in a tumbler.)—Really, my dear, what's the good of bringing up a thimbleful like this? I thought I told you only yesterday that these little sips only made me want more. Go and fetch me another glass." (Exit lady.) "That's the great secret, to avoid becoming a slave to it, sir; don't keep on tippling, but take as much as you feel you want, and then leave off."

I could not help suspecting that if my companion acted literally on this principle, he would not leave off for a very considerable time to come.

So far I had not gained much. I had got some light on Sir Arthur Redleigh's character, but nothing that could possibly account either for Lord Fatheringham's aversion for him, a matter about which I was still very curious, or for any enmity on his part towards his victim. I now dropped the master, and turned the conversation on to the servant.

"Did you know anything about the man that was shot?" I asked.

"Burlston? Ah, yes, I saw something of him from time to time. He wasn't as steady as he might have been, I'm afraid, and I don't wonder at it, with that wife of his."

"Why, is she a Tartar?"

"No, I rather think he was the Tartar, when it came to that. But they say she drinks like a fish. He used to beat her for it, too, and she took out a summons against him once for it, but Mr. Grosse was on the bench, and he persuaded her to withdraw it; I suppose because he thought Sir Arthur would be annoyed."

"Are they great friends, then?"

"Why, no, I don't know that they are particular friends; rather the contrary, I should say, because Mr. Grosse is a respectable, proud sort of man, who wouldn't associate with a drunken blackguard like that much; and I don't blame him. Whatever are they doing with that other brandy? Excuse me a moment, sir." And he got up.

I rose at the same time.

"I must be going on," I said; "I have several calls to make, and it's getting late. Was Burlston a native of Haughton?"

"No, he wasn't, he'd only been in this part about four years. He came to Sir Arthur from Norfolk, I believe. But won't you wet your lips once more before you start, sir?"

"No, thank you. I can't; but I should like you to get me some lunch at two, when I come back from a couple of visits I have to pay. And while I'm about it, as I don't know the district, you may as well let your people put a horse into something, and drive me round."

While they were getting the trap ready I was turning over in my mind what steps to take next. I had heard as much village gossip as I cared for at present, and it did not seem likely that I should discover much more information of value by lingering in Haughton. I therefore determined to take the bull by the horns, and pay a visit to Sir Arthur Redleigh himself.

Before presenting myself at Haughton Court, however, I thought it would be as well to pay a call at the house of Sir Arthur's friend, Mr. Grosse. For this I had a splendid excuse in the rector's recommendation, and I thought it possible I might extract from him information about the other man of a more valuable kind than could be furnished by such a person as the landlord of the hotel. Moreover, I could not shake off the feeling left on my mind after my interview with Lord Fatheringham that Mr. Grosse was in some way mixed up with the mystery of his lordship's hatred for Sir Arthur Redleigh. In any case, of course Mr. Grosse was one of the persons best able to throw light, if he chose, on the circumstances connected with the death of poor Burlston. If that had been anything more than an accident he ought to be aware of it.

As soon as the trap was ready, therefore, I ordered the driver to take me to Mr. Grosse's place. A drive of some twenty minutes brought us there. It was a fine house, standing in well-wooded grounds of its own. I gave my card to the man who opened the door, and he brought me straight in the room where his master was.

As he opened the door I heard these words, uttered in stern and even in threatening tones—

"That is my will, and if you dare to disobey me——"

The opening of the door checked the speaker at that point, but I was in time to catch a glimpse of the family scene I was interrupting.

There were only two people in the room. On one side of a large table, the side nearest the door, stood a tall, dark, stern-looking man, who was, of course, Mr. Grosse himself. Opposite to him, and facing me as I came in, was one of the most charming little things I have ever met. She could hardly have been more than eighteen, and she looked as fresh and winsome as a child of eight. But something had evidently distressed her terribly, for she was weeping as if her heart would break. She could not stop herself even at the sight of a stranger, but put her handkerchief to her face and hastily darted past me out of the room.

Her father gave the servant a glare as if he would have annihilated him, and did not look much more amiably at me. But my dress doubtless restrained any unseemly ebullition, and he asked me civilly enough to take a seat.

I explained about the meeting, and how Mr. Brown had mentioned his name to me as a probable supporter. I could see he was making great efforts to calm himself as he listened, and when I finished he readily consented to be present. I then observed——

"I hope to induce Lord Fatheringham to take the chair."

"Oh, indeed! I am glad to hear it. He is my cousin, as you may be aware."

I said I understood as much, and then added—

"Perhaps you can induce some of the neighbouring gentry to support us; Sir Arthur Redleigh, for instance?"

A frown came over his face, and he cast a quick glance of suspicion at me, which made me fear for one moment that he had fathomed my motive in being there. But the look passed as quickly as it had come, and he answered:

"Sir Arthur Redleigh is the last man in the world who would be likely to come to your meeting. What made you suggest his name?"

"I gathered that you knew him," I said, calmly, "from seeing your names connected in the newspaper."

He bit his lip under this direct thrust, and hesitated before he spoke again.

"I am afraid you have derived a wrong impression. Of course, you refer to the report of the inquest on that unfortunate gamekeeper. It is true that Sir Arthur Redleigh and I are neighbours, and that we happened to be out shooting together on that day, but otherwise I can assure you that there is no intimacy between us whatever, and I am very annoyed that my name has been bracketed with his over that wretched affair."

He spoke with considerable warmth, and seemed more anxious to disassociate himself from Redleigh than the occasion really required.

Making a mental note of this, I ventured to pursue the subject by saying:

"I can understand your feeling, sir. The business was not a pleasant one, and, even putting the most charitable construction upon it, Sir Arthur has not come out of it particularly well. I suppose it was true, as stated at the inquest, that he and the gamekeeper were on good terms?"

"Certainly." Mr. ,Grosse spoke quite eagerly. "I should be very sorry if I thought that any one had any doubt upon that point. You may take it from me that there is no room for the faintest suggestion of anything of that kind. Redleigh is not a man whom I can esteem —his way of life and mine are very different—but, still, I am confident that he is incapable of falsehood on such a point."

He showed almost as much warmth in defending Sir Arthur as he had just done in repudiating his friendship. I nodded, as if satisfied with this statement, and then remarked in my most casual manner:

"By-the-bye, do you happen to know anything about the poor fellow's widow, Mrs. Burlston?"

I was not a little surprised by the effect of this harmless question. He had evidently been feeling uncomfortable for some time, and this last shot warned him that he was being drawn. He threw an angry look at me, and rudely rose to his feet as though to intimate that the interview was at an end.

"Pardon me," he said, haughtily, "but I prefer not to discuss anything connected with the very disagreeable incidents of the last few days. As I have already told you, my connection with the matter was the result of the merest accident, and I find it extremely annoying to be made the victim of the impertinent curiosity of village gossips. I trust you will have a very successful meeting."

It was practically a dismissal, and I had no alternative but to bow myself out with as little loss of dignity as possible. On reaching the trap I simply gave the word to the driver to take me back, not knowing who might be listening, but as soon as we were safely out the grounds, I ordered him to drive me on to Haughton Court.

Haughton Court is a very fine place. Not, of course, on a great scale like the Towers, but still very much above the average country gentleman's seat. I did not much wonder that old Brown had made his daughter accept it, although coupled with the hand of a drunken wretch.

We drove up an avenue of trees to the house. Everything was very quiet, and not a soul was visible about.

An undefined suspicion crept into my mind that something must have happened. I grew positively nervous as it occurred to me that my victim might have escaped me by some fresh catastrophe.

It was with a trembling hand that I pulled the bell.

I had to wait some time for an answer, an interval during which my apprehensions increased. At last I could bear it no longer, and rang again.

The door was immediately opened by a footman in slovenly attire, who glanced disrespectfully over my ecclesiastical plumage.

"Is Sir Arthur at home?" I asked.

"No, sir," was the airy response.

"When do you expect him in?"

"Not for some days, sir. He's gone to Scotland."

To Scotland! Where Lady Redleigh's asylum was supposed to be situated! What did this mean?

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PRIVATE ASYLUM.

ON referring to my diary, I find I left off with my rebuff at Haughton Court.

I admit that with all my experience, I was fairly floored by the news that my man had gone off to Scotland, within two days of the inquest at which he played so prominent a part.

Of course, I at once assumed that he had gone down to see his unfortunate wife. I said to the servant:

"Scotland? Do you know what part of Scotland Sir Arthur has gone to?"

"Can't say, I'm sure, sir—(chink)—leastways, except I know where he generally goes—(chink, chink)—thank you, sir, and that's to the Royal Stuart Hotel, Stirling."

"To see Lady Redleigh, I suppose?"

"So we believe, sir." His manner had undergone a wonderful change. "Sir Arthur has gone there once or twice a year ever since his wedding."

"And what time did he start?"

"Just now, sir. He hadn't been gone more than half-an-hour when you came, sir. If you drove straight into Stalne you might catch him before he goes on from there."

I thanked the man and jumped into my vehicle, determined to act on his advice. Another piece of legerdemain with her Majesty's metal image silenced any scruples on the part of my charioteer, and we bowled rapidly off towards the cathedral city, distant about six miles.

I need scarcely say I had no intention of accosting Sir Arthur Redleigh on the railway platform. My plan, formed on the spur of the moment, was to follow him down to Stirling, and track him to the asylum in which his mad wife was confined.

I had no definite purpose in this. But it seemed a favourable opportunity for ascertaining the exact locality of the asylum, which I might otherwise have some difficulty in finding, should I want to do so later on. Moreover, I thought that a railway journey would give me opportunity of forming Sir Arthur's acquaintance, and studying his character, which I could not otherwise get.

Fortunately, I had plenty of money about me. Lord Fatheringham's solicitor had supplied me well before I came down. But it struck me that I should find my costume a fatal obstacle to any close acquaintance with the baronet, as he would be sure to fight shy of anything in the shape of a parson. I had no time to provide myself with anything in Stalne, but I scribbled a telegram, as we bowled along, to my chum Verinder in the Yard, asking him to send down a good sporting make-up to the Glasgow station. I calculated that, going down from London, it would get there as soon as we should, starting from a remote place like Stalne.

Well, we drove up to the St. John's Station just in time. There, on the platform, sure enough, was the baronet, whom my driver pointed out to me. I paid him for the trap and for the lunch I was destined never to consume, sent off my wire, and jumped into a first smoking after my quarry just as the train began to move.

He looked by no means such a blackguard as I had been led to expect. Unless I had heard so much about him beforehand, he would not have struck me as being any worse than the average fast-living country swell with more time than work and more money than brains.

He glanced towards me with a look of ill-concealed annoyance as I sprang in.

I pretended to mistake the movement as a friendly greeting, and instantly responded with a cheerful nod, remarking at the same time:

"A close run that! It wouldn't have done for me to miss it either, because I want to get to Glasgow to-night."

"Oh, indeed!" he replied, shortly, evidently annoyed at the idea that I was going so far with him.

"Anything in the papers this morning?" I asked in my most cordial manner, seeing that he was about to bury himself in a salmon-coloured sporting sheet.

"No," he grunted; "nothing worth reading."

"Anything fresh about that affair near here that they tried to work up into a sensation — the 'Haughton tragedy' I think they called it?"

"No, sir. What should there be?" he retorted, fairly roused at last.

I felt it was neck or nothing. So I said:

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure; but the fact is I haven't had time to get a paper this morning, and being interested in that case, I felt curious to know if there was anything more about it."

That fetched him. He pricked up his ears, and assumed a more civil manner, as he responded:

"No apology, sir. I'm afraid I spoke hastily. I'm not feeling quite myself this morning, and railway travelling always puts me out." And to prove his words he drew forth a spirit flask wherewith to recruit his energies.

Before putting it to his own lips he went through the formality of offering it to me, and I could see his opinion of me rose 50 per cent. when I replied by pulling a flask out of my own pocket and keeping him company in a slight refresher.

I knew quite well for what purpose he was taking in a supply of Dutch courage, and I was quite ready for him when he turned round with a clumsy assumption of carelessness, and said:

"Did you say you were interested in that Haughton affair?"

"Yes," I said. While I was waiting for him to speak I had hastily matured my plan. "I am connected with a Church Society of which Lord Fatheringham is one of the chief patrons, and I was surprised to see his name in the papers as being present at the inquest."

"I should think so, the old brute. What the blazes brought him there, unless he wanted to gloat over the sight of an enemy in trouble?"

"An enemy? You mean Sir Arthur Redleigh. Is he an enemy of Lord Fatheringham's?"

"Yes, at least Fatheringham is an enemy of his. So they say," he added, becoming aware that he was showing a little too much local knowledge.

"Why is that?" I asked, innocently.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered, shortly, resuming his former unpleasant manner.

"Well," I said, "Fatheringham didn't take much by his move. That jury brought Redleigh through like bricks."

Nothing else of consequence passed between us during the next two hours. At the end of that time we rolled into Bristol, where we had to change into a fresh train for the North. The baronet seized the opportunity to slip away from me, and rather than appear to be dogging him, I let him go.

We got to Glasgow late at night, and I saw my man into a cab, which he ordered to take him to a big hotel near the station. I found my parcel from London waiting for me, as I expected, and getting into another cab, told the driver to take me for half an hour at a slow pace through some quiet streets.

The object of this was, of course, to effect a change of costume. Having transformed myself into a sporting Englishman of the regulation pattern, I drove back into the principal streets, and purchased a little more luggage. The cabman's look when I emerged from his cab in my new clothes and hair was a treat.

Finally, I made him take me to the hotel selected Redleigh, where I secured a room for the night. I marched into the coffee-room and said in a good [illegible] voice —*not* my Copingstone voice, I need scarcely say:

"Waiter, what time is there a train for Stirling in the morning?"

I then looked round and saw my friend sitting at a side table over a railway time-book. Sure enough he had heard my question, and at once looked up. The waiter answered:

"That gentleman has the book just now, sir; I'll bring it you as soon as he's done."

"All right," said Sir Arthur, civilly enough. "I've done with the book now." And he handed it to the waiter for me.

I stepped forward and thanked him.

"The fact is, I've got a disagreeable job to do," I went on, "and I want to get it over as soon as possible. My wife's sister has gone wrong with a sort of religious mania, and I want to put her into some place where she'll be kindly treated and taken care of. And they've recommended me to a place at Stirling, a Doctor—Doctor—bless my soul, I forget the name."

Sir Arthur could hardly parry this thrust. If we were both going to the same place, it would look very strange on his part to conceal the fact. With rather an ill grace he remarked:

"There's no private asylum that I know of in Stirling itself. But a few miles out, at Auchtertown——"

"Ah, that's it!" I interrupted. "That's the place I meant. I didn't know but what it was a suburb of Stirling. Sir William Clark recommended it to me. Do you happen to know the proprietor's name?"

"Yes," was the reluctant answer, "Dr. Raebell. The fact is that I have a friend under his care, whom I am on my way to visit."

"Oh, that's the style. We can go down together. What's your train?"

He told me, and then the conversation passed to other topics. This time I made no allusions to the Haughton tragedy, but aimed simply at putting my man thoroughly at his ease.

In this I did not succeed, however. Whatever was the reason, he appeared to be labouring under some mental oppression which he could not shake off. More than once he failed to notice that I was speaking to him, and on other occasions he would answer me in a random way that showed his thoughts were elsewhere.

I ventured upon one allusion to the object of his visit to Dr. Raebell's, but he received this rather rudely, and immediately afterwards made a pretext about letters to write, and retired to his own room.

We met at breakfast the next morning, and drove in the same cab to the station.

The run to Stirling is not a long one, and we soon got there, and chartered a carriage and pair for Auchtertown, which turned out to be an inaccessible sort of hamlet, distant seven or eight miles.

On the way I prattled freely of my unhappy sister-in-law, and the nature and causes of her distressing malady. But I failed to elicit the least answering information from my moody fellow-traveller, who grew more and more absorbed and gloomy as we neared our destination.

At last the carriage drew up in front of a solid-looking door in a high wall, and we got out and were admitted. My companion was evidently known to the porter.

Once inside, the place looked cheerful enough. The grounds were spacious and bright, and the mansion which rose in the centre was well and tastefully built. There were none of those barrack-like features which one associates with the idea of an asylum.

We passed two or three inmates strolling about the grounds. And just as we got to the front door out came the proprietor himself, in walking attire.

Dr. Raebell was a stout, greasy man, with luxuriant whiskers, a bald head, and an eternal smile—the kind of man who is for ever running over with the milk and honey of human benevolence. He greeted Sir Arthur with cordial deference as an old client, and me with cordial respect as a possible new client, and ushered us into a cheerful little study, hung round with graceful little etchings of the French school, and further adorned with a piece of statuary representing a boy clothed exclusively in a Phrygian cap, on his knees, feeding an eagle out of what appeared to be a bowl of milk. (Query—Do eagles drink milk?)

The doctor noticed that my eye had been attracted by this object of art, and proceeded to deliver the following brief homily in a tone which reminded me of the guide who shows you over Westminster Abbey or Wombwell's menagerie.

"Ah, I see you looking at that group, a replica, of course, not an original, my emoluments here do not admit of that. You observe the idea, the eagle, unchained, is reconciled to its captivity by the loving attentions of its captor. An emblem, I would observe, of the system pursued in this establishment."

I was much impressed, for I did not know then what I have since learnt, that the story which the sculptor had in his mind was the exact reverse, and that it was the eagle who captured the boy, and not the boy the eagle.

But Sir Arthur, who had no doubt heard Dr. Raebell on the subject before, listened impatiently.

"Doctor," he broke in at the end, "I particularly wish to speak to you in private for a short time."

"Oh, very good, sir. I will ring for my assistant, and he can show your friend round the establishment."

Sir Arthur at once explained.

"I haven't the honour of this gentleman's acquaintance. We merely happened to be coming here at the same time, so we drove out together."

"Quite so," I hastened to add. "I was recommended to place a female relative in your care, and I thought I should like a look round first. My name," I added, "is Tracey-Cooke."

The doctor brightened up at this, and when his assistant entered he handed me over to him with much state. I would have given a hundred pound note to put my ear to the keyhole for five minutes, but of course it was out of the question.

I began to sound my cicerone instead.

"How is our poor friend's wife?" I said, nodding back towards the room we had left.

"Oh, you are a friend of Mr. Robins?" he said. "There's no difference in her. It's a curious case."

*Mr. Robins!* I could hardly repress the start of surprise with which I learnt that the baronet had lodged his wife here under a false name. What did this portend? It might be a natural desire to avoid publicity. But I was in a state of mind to suspect an evil motive in everything.

"Yes," I said, "were you here when she was first received?"

"No, I came a year afterwards. But I understand there has been absolutely no change in her since."

"You know the story, of course?"

"I know that she went mad on her wedding-day, that's all. I never heard of any reason for her doing so, and the remarkable thing about it is that she is, and always has been, in wonderful health, physically. So the cause, whatever it was, must have been purely mental, I imagine."

"Over-excitement, very likely," I suggested.

"Possibly something of the sort. The remarkable thing about her case is that she is never violent except when her husband comes to see her. The sight of him maddens her directly. Of course you know she believes she is the Virgin Mary."

"So I heard. By-the-bye, there would be no harm in my seeing her a moment before Robins comes up would there?"

"Oh, no; at least, I should think not. You're going to look over the ladies' department, and we shall see her somewhere, no doubt."

I leave out any description of the various rooms and their inmates. There were not more than twenty altogether in the female department. We came in due course into the large drawing-room, and there I saw a sight I shall never forget.

Seated there by the window, on a low basket chair, was one of the loveliest women I have beheld, or ever expect to behold. Her beauty was of that grand commanding character that can only be described by me as queenly.

The eye had hardly power to distinguish the different elements of charm, the stately neck, the magnificent dark hair and eyes, the rich soft hues of the skin, so dazzling was the full volume of loveliness. She might have been chosen by a painter who sought to depict Queen Esther in her hour of triumph when she shone forth above all the other chosen maidens of Media, and seated herself by the divine right of beauty on the throne of the great King.

But I must not let myself be carried away like this. Enough to say that I no longer wondered at the havoc Laura Brown had caused among the Stalneshire youth, when I cast my eyes upon Dr. Raebell's patient.

And what was she doing? If anything had been wanting to warm my tough old heart into sympathy and devotion to her, it would have been the situation in which we came upon her.

She was holding in her lap a blue-eyed, golden-haired mite of three or four years old, and teaching her to thread beads to make a ring.

I stopped involuntarily. Dr. Graham, the assistant, comprehended my feelings and whispered to me:

"Would you believe that woman was mad?"

"She is more like a goddess," I returned in the same tones. "Whose child is that?"

"The gardener's. Its mother died last year, and ever since then it has spent its whole time with Mrs. Robins. She never would associate with the other patients, and so this child is her one companion."

During this colloquy Laura (as I might venture to call her for short) had noticed our presence, and she nodded pleasantly to the young doctor.

"Would you like to speak to her?" he whispered.

"No, no," I answered, feeling that I was in rather a false position.

We went on our round, and finished by strolling through the gardens. When we got back to the house we found Dr. Raebell alone.

"Mr. Robins has gone," he explained to me. "He was in a hurry, and so I sent him back to Stirling in my own carriage. He desired his apologies to you."

"Oh, all right. He seemed to me a very pleasant fellow indeed."

"Yes. By-the-bye, Graham, you had better go and see if you can do anything for his wife. He went and saw her, and she's off again."

The assistant looked distressed and hurried out of the room.

"How sad!" I exclaimed. "When I saw her she looked the picture of health and all."

"Ah, appearances, only appearances! I never trust them, my dear sir. That woman suffers from a deep-seated and dangerous malady which may carry her off at any moment, literally at any moment. How did you like our arrangements?"

"Very well, indeed; in fact I may say it is only a question of terms whether I place my sister-in-law with you. But I was strangely interested by the sight of that lovely woman, and I can't believe she has really become frenzied in the brief time that has elapsed since I saw her."

The doctor smiled at my remarks with compassionate superiority.

"Ah, no doubt it seems strange to you. But there is an easy way of satisfying your doubts. If you're not afraid of a rather painful and shocking spectacle, come with me and we'll take a look at her."

I embraced the offer, and we proceeded upstairs again. This time I was taken down a different passage, with a baize door at the extreme end. As we came near it I fancied I could hear occasional screams. My guide threw it open when we got there, opened another stronger door inside, and another baize door inside that. Then we were in the padded room.

It was a terrible scene. I wished I had not accepted the doctor's offer. That grandly beautiful creature lay on the floor, her clothes torn almost to rags, writhing in the folds of a strait waistcoat, and giving utterance to piercing shriek after shriek. Her long hair, beautiful still, swept loose over her face and neck, and every now and then she shook it back with the movement of an angry lion.

I did not stop to observe more, but turned quickly and made my escape from the scene.

"She will be like that for the rest of the day, I expect," said Dr. Raebell, "and then to-morrow she'll be like a sane woman."

"But if her mania is confined to the occasions when she meets her husband, why not let her go and live in some distant place where they can never meet?"

"We have made her the offer. Her husband and I have both made it, but she refuses to go."

And I drove away from Auchertown, and took train for the south with that sentence repeating itself in my brain.

"*She refuses to go.*"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE NEW GAMEKEEPER.

A DAY or two had passed, and Sir Arthur Redleigh was seated at his desk trying to draw up an advertisement for insertion in the STALNESHIRE MORNING NEWS. His abilities as a *litterateur* had never been greatly cultivated, and he found his present task almost more than he could grapple with successfully. So far the result of his labours ran like this:

"Wanted immediately, on a private estate in this county, an experienced gamekeeper, by a gentleman, accustomed to the care of dogs, where two assistants are kept. Wages——"

The baronet was gazing uneasily at this composition when a servant came to inform him that a man named Smith was asking to see him. Not sorry to be interrupted, Sir Arthur signified his willingness, and the man was shown in.

"Well, what is it?" said the baronet.

By way of reply the stranger made a rambling statement to the effect that he had just returned from New Zealand, where he had been engaged in various kinds of open air work, and now found himself stranded. Sir Arthur heard him out, and, meanwhile, took thorough stock of his appearance. The result was favourable, for he at once rejoined:

"I see. And now I suppose you want me to find you something to do, eh?"

"Well, sir, I did hear in Haughton as how you had just dismissed a keeper, and thinks I to myself, I can't do any harm by applying for the place."

Sir Arthur was soothed by this delicate passing over of Burlston's fate. He answered:

"Well, but suppose I thought of taking you, what should I do about a character—references, you know? Is there anyone in England who knows you?"

"Not a soul," replied Mr. Smith, cheerfully. "All my own friends are either dead or in New Zealand, and the people of the neighbourhood where I was born didn't recognise me. But I have got some papers here from Auckland, and I can refer you to my last employers out there, Messrs. Farraway, cattle farmers."

The baronet shrugged his shoulders, but nevertheless took the offered documents and glanced over them.

"It would take three months for a letter to get out there, and a reply to come back," he observed. "And I want some one at once."

"Take me on trial, then, sir. Take me till you get someone better, anyway; and if I don't suit, you can turn me off when you like."

The baronet hesitated; the upshot was that he engaged the applicant, and told him to return in the morning.

This Mr. Smith did, arriving punctually at ten. Sir Arthur was not down, so the new keeper employed the interval in making himself generally agreeable to the servants of the house. He seemed to take particular interest in asking about the late keeper's widow, who still retained possession of the lodge which had formed her husband's official residence. The general opinion seemed to be that Mr. Smith would be expected to share its accommodation with her, and that he was not to be congratulated on the prospect.

Sure enough, when the baronet at last appeared he announced to his new employee that he was to take up his quarters with Mrs. Burlston, who had agreed to cook for him, and generally act as housekeeper as long as she remained on the premises. He then offered to take Smith down and make him acquainted with the widow; and they set off.

The lodge was soon reached, and proved to be one of those edifices which are constructed more with a view to the æsthetic taste of the passer-by than to the comfort of the unfortunate creatures who have got to live inside. The sitting-room was well-furnished, but suffered from an air of discomfort and neglect. The table was covered with a cloth which was far from clean, and though it was now past eleven the breakfast things had not been cleared away. The fireplace looked equally untidy, various odds and ends, including a couple of corks, having found their way into the fender. These and other details impressed themselves upon Mr. Smith's attention, and caused him to murmur beneath his breath, "Drink—or trouble—or both?"

Mrs. Burlston proved to be a plain-featured woman of some forty years of age. Her features showed the ravages of some factor besides age, and her hair was turning grey before its time. Beyond this there was not much to remark in her appearance. Her expression in repose was sullen and brooding, but she looked pleasant enough for the moment as she bade Mr. Smith welcome.

Sir Arthur left them together, and the new-comer began to make himself agreeable to the widow. Naturally his first reference was to her recent loss, on which he condoled with her in almost exaggerated terms.

But the widow received his remarks with coldness, and in fact seemed displeased by them, for after a commonplace expression of acknowledgment, she bade him follow her upstairs to see his bedroom.

"I really have not had the spirit to do anything to it yet," she said, "but now you've come I'll see and put it to rights. It won't take long, and I can do it while dinner's getting ready. Dinner at one 'll suit you, I suppose?"

Mr. Smith assented, and then left the lodge for a time, after having first deposited a securely-locked portmanteau in the corner of his room.

In the course of a stroll round the grounds he came across the boy who had given evidence at the inquest. He introduced himself to the lad, and they got into chat.

It was not long before the familiar subject cropped up.

"How did you come to make that mistake about the distance?" asked the new keeper, who appeared to have familiarised himself with the report of the proceedings.

"'Twarn't no mistake of mine," returned Martin. "Dr. Druscott, he said as I was right."

"Well, but how do you account for the gentlemen both saying it was double as far?"

"Oh, I dunno. 'Tain't no business of mine."

"Is that Mr. Grosse a good one for tips?" went on the stranger.

"Well, that I can't say. He never gave me nothing, but then I warn't never out with un except that once."

The other's face assumed a look of bland surprise.

"Then doesn't he often shoot with Sir Arthur?"

"Lor bless you, no. I don't believe they'd been out together afore not since I've been here, and that's going on two years."

"Then they aren't such great friends, after all?"

"They ain't friends at all as I knows on, leastways except they've been to each other's houses a bit lately. We did think at one time that the master was a bit sweet on Miss Eva, but she's engaged now to young Mr. Haworthy, down the other side of Fatheringham."

"Oh, how long has that been on?"

"Sometime now I think, but I can't rightly fix it, not to say."

Mr. Smith looked thoughtful. After a few more remarks of a general character he left his young assistant and strolled back to the lodge.

It was one o'clock when he got there, so he stepped in and inquired after his dinner. Mrs. Burlston gave him an unfriendly reception, and informed him that it would not be ready for another twenty minutes.

Most men would have shown vexation at such a delay. But if Mrs. Burlston had expected her new inmate to be annoyed she was out in her reckoning. Nothing could have been more placid and contented than the way in which he sat down in the porch of the little cottage and took out a pipe.

"I hope you don't mind my smoking?" he said, politely.

"Not out there, I don't," was the ungracious reply.

But Mr. Smith was not to be put off by surliness. He maintained such a persistently civil demeanour that the widow was insensibly mollified, and when it came to his offering to assist her to lay the cloth, and insisting on carrying the bucket to the well for water, and performing other services which the deceased Burlston had never dreamt of undertaking, Mrs. Burlston thawed rapidly, and ended by becoming quite amiable.

At last they sat down to dinner, and then the stranger's attentions were redoubled. The very way he took up the carving-knife had something deferential in it; and his anxiety to help the widow to the best of everything, and to see that she ate at least twice as much as himself, was quite touching. Vague but pleasing suggestions began to flit across the lady's mind, and when she crossed the room to fetch in the pudding she stopped to glance at herself in the mirror.

By the time dinner was over the pair were fast friends, far better friends, indeed, than man and wife had been under that very roof, if the gossip picked up by Mr. Smith was to be believed.

When this happy state of things had been reached, and been consummated by the production of a bottle from the cupboard containing a liquid not unlike water in appearance, but decidedly stronger on the palate, Mr. Smith ventured upon a reference to the delicate subject of his predecessor's character.

"That husband of yours was rather a rough sort, wasn't he?"

This time he had taken Mrs. Burlston the right way. She at once responded:

"Rough! Rough isn't the word for it. If I didn't feel as I'd known you for years, Mr. Smith, and that you're a man that can be trusted"——here Mr. Smith bowed with dignity, as one whose approving conscience told him the praise was not unmerited——"I shouldn't care to talk to you about it. Those servants up at the house do gossip so, and they're such low creatures, that I never have anything to say to them. But I can see with half an eye that you're a gentleman—"

"And I'm sure anyone could see at a glance that you're a perfect lady, ma'am," threw in her listener.

The widow gave a gratified smile.

"Ah," she said, "there was a time when I was so considered, and I don't know now why I shouldn't go away from here and set up for somebody elsewhere. It isn't want of money would stop me."

"No, of course," remarked her friend. "Sir Arthur's bound to do the handsome thing by you."

She tossed her head.

"Oh, it's not much he'll do, though he did promise me I should have half what Burlston used to get. But I've other friends of my own, and if it hadn't been for that precious husband of mine, I might have been off and enjoying myself before this."

"I'm sure I hope you won't go yet awhile, ma'am."

A pause ensued, and then Mr. Smith added, in a careless manner:

"You were going to tell me about your other friend, from whom you have expectations?"

"Was I?" murmured Catherine dreamily, and then she suddenly started up, her whole manner changed, and she cried, harshly:

"No, I was't going to do anything of the sort. That's my secret." And she turned away and began to clear up the dinner things.

Mr. Smith received this rebuff without showing any disappointment. He rose and went out to attend to his duties, and it was not till he was out of earshot of the lodge that his lips moved, and he muttered aloud:

"So *that's* your secret."

## CHAPTER VI.

### CATHERINE'S SECRET.

AFTER remaining away all the afternoon, Mr. Smith returned at tea time to the lodge.

In so far as he aimed to cultivate Mrs. Burlston's friendship, he found his work had partly to be done over again. That is to say, he found the widow only a little less sullen towards him than she had been in the morning. But she relented more quickly this time, and by a judicious avoidance of dangerous topics, and an adroit use of compliment, he succeeded in putting her on thoroughly good terms with herself first, and with himself as a natural sequel.

Accordingly they soon found themselves on the most cordial footing together, and as the night drew in they got more and more confidential. The bottle already alluded to was not without its share in promoting this pleasing state of things, and under the combined influence of gin and flattery she grew quite talkative.

The conversation turned on the various local characters, especially the friends of their patron, Sir Arthur Redleigh. The fate of Lady Redleigh had been referred to, and Catherine confirmed the story of which the reader is already in possession, adding that the Rev. Mr. Brown, the bride's father, seemed perfectly satisfied with his son-in-law's conduct throughout the terrible circumstances, and the two were good friends still.

"They were telling me up at the house that there's likely to be another wedding in the neighbourhood," was Mr. Smith's next remark. "They tell me it's a match between Miss Eva Grosse and young Mr. Haworthy."

Catherine seemed interested.

"Is it really? I didn't hear anything about that," she said.

"I only know what they tell me. Is it true that she is the prettiest girl round about since Lady Redleigh's time?"

"I daresay. I don't know, I'm sure."

"Is Mr. Grosse a widower?"

"No. But Mrs. Grosse is a great invalid, and keeps her bed."

"I see. He doesn't seem a very popular sort of a man, does he?"

"It's no odds to me what he is." Catherine said this as if she did not care to pursue the subject.

Then Mr. Smith pondered for a moment, and finally, fixing his eyes full on the widow's face, he asked:

"Do you know anything about Lord Fatheringham?"

For once questioner and questioned were equally taken aback—she, by the mere mention of the name, and he, by its effect on her.

"What do you mean?" she cried in a loud, strange voice, her eyeballs swelling, and every limb stiffening as she sat. "How dare you ask me that?"

Her companion hastened to offer his apologies.

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure. I knew nothing about him myself, good or bad, beyond the fact that he was the principal man about here. I never dreamt that you had any dislike for him."

These words seem to relieve Mrs. Burlston of a strain upon her mind. Her eyes softened, and her tense muscles gradually relaxed.

"I don't like him," she said; "I can't bear the sound of his name. Never mention it to me again if you want me and you to be friends."

"I won't. I'm very sorry I alluded to him at all," the other hastened to protest.

"I was nurse there once," went on the widow, as if realising that she ought to furnish some explanation of her strange demeanour. "It was when his son died—Lord East, you know—and I've never cared to hear the family spoken about since. The Earl didn't treat me well, for one thing."

"Yes."

"And that was the last case I ever took. I married Burlston just after, and came here to live." The widow paused awhile, and then added, as if conscious that her explanation was a rather lame one:

"But there, I'll take it as a favour if you never say anything, or ask me anything more about it. And don't you tell the others at the house that you were speaking to me about it. I can't bear their prying ways."

Mr. Smith hastened to profess himself more than satisfied, and solemnly promised never to return to the subject, either with her or with anybody else.

He changed the conversation, and told her anecdotes of his New Zealand life, in which Maories, kangaroos, and boomerangs played an extensive part, till bed-time.

For the next few days Mr. Smith went about quietly, talking with everybody about the place he could find to talk to, and winning golden opinions by his cheerful and affable manners.

It is true that he did not show any superabundant zeal in the discharge of his duties as gamekeeper. If the truth must be told, he neglected his work most shamefully, and Sir Arthur was not long in finding out that his new employee was no very valuable acquisition. He did not care to send him away till he had got someone better to replace him, but he sent a modified form of his advertisement to the Stalne paper.

Meanwhile Mr. Smith was picking up a good deal of miscellaneous information about the various inhabitants of the neighbourhood. He heard all about the great Duke of Instaple and his feud with Lord Fatheringham. He heard about the latter's eccentricities, and how they had increased, if they did not date from the tragic death of his son. He sounded his various informants as to the circumstances of the death, but the answer in every case was the same. Lord East had died from a sharp attack of *delirium tremens*, brought on by a course of life of the very worst kind. It was remembered that Catherine Wiseman, now Mrs. Burlston, but then a trained nurse at Stalne, had been in attendance on the occasion, but no one furnished the slightest clue to explain her strange agitation at the mention of the event.

After he had been in his new situation nearly a week, he happened to be strolling along a lane on Mr. Grosse's property, when he saw a young man riding towards him from the direction of the house.

As he came near, Mr. Smith saw that the face was that of a stranger to him. From his dress he seemed to belong to the gentry, and a little practice in the art of putting two and two together enabled the keeper to speculate that this must be young Mr. Haworthy, Miss Grosse's betrothed.

He therefore took a searching survey of him as he went past. The result was altogether favourable. Mr. Haworthy—for he it was—showed himself to have a fine, open, intelligent countenance, full of courage and energy. But at the present moment he was not acting the part of the happy lover very suitably. His whole manner betrayed, on the contrary, the deepest dejection, and Mr. Smith racked his brain to account for this sight.

So puzzled and so interested did he become over the problem that he took the decided step of going over to Broadmead that evening, and calling at the keeper's lodge. He had already met the tenant of the lodge once or twice on his rounds along the bordering estate, and they had got as far as exchanging the time of day.

It therefore did not prove very difficult for Mr. Smith to introduce himself to his neighbour's hearth in the character of a friendly visitor, and they were soon deep in chat on the affairs of their common calling.

Mr. Smith became eloquent on the subject of poachers, and thereby won his hearer's heart.

"Poachers is vermin, I hold, and should be shot as such," he concluded.

The other nodded approval of this Draconian sentiment.

"Talking of that," went on Mr. Smith, with some irrelevance, "who was that young gent I met this afternoon, coming down your lane, Mr. Dawson?"

"On horseback, d'you mean?" said Mr. Dawson.

"Yes."

"That was Mr. Haworthy, the young fellow that Miss Eva's engaged to, leastways *was* engaged to."

"What! Isn't she now?"

"No; I heard only just before you came in that it's broken off. The coachman was in here telling me about it."

"Dear me! And when did that happen?"

"Well, they think that it was only finally done today, but that it has been coming for some days, because Miss Eva hasn't been like herself at all; she's been that moping and miserable, they tell me."

"Then why on earth has she broken it off?"

"Ah, the coachman says it isn't her doing at all, but master's. There's been scenes between them lately, and Miss Eva's come out from them looking like a ghost, and old Grosse—he's been that crusty and cantankerous that we've all been afraid to speak to him."

"That's very strange," murmured Mr. Smith.

"Ain't it? And all the more so because Miss Eva's always been such a pet. She could do what she liked with her father ever since she was that high."

The speaker lowered his hand to mark a height of about two feet from the floor, but his listener was [illegible] looking.

"And this Mr. Haworthy, what sort of a man is
was Mr. Smith's next question.

"A thorough good sort. Never went out with me yet that he didn't tip me a sovereign. Comes of a good old Stalneshire family, too."

"And has he any connection with Sir Arthur—with my master?"

"Not he. What connection should he have? Unless it was as a sort of rival. Sir Arthur's been here a bit this last month or two making eyes at Miss Eva, so they say, for all the world as if he hadn't got a wife already, the brute."

Mr. Smith listened thoughtfully, and put some further questions. But nothing else transpired worth noting. He then took his leave, expressing a hope that his visit would speedily be returned by Mr. Dawson.

Though Mr. Smith had proved himself somewhat remiss in his official duties, he had been careful not to neglect Mrs. Burlston all this time. As the result of his attentions, an atmosphere of the utmost friendliness prevailed in the Lodge. They began to call each other Jem and Catherine, and soon malicious tongues up at the house were not wanting to say that the late Burlston would have a successor with his relict before the grass was green above his grave.

At last, after about a fortnight's persistent siege, Mr. Smith thought the time had come for an assault. It was nine o'clock in the evening, supper had just been disposed of, and they were sitting together in front of the fire, Catherine becoming slightly sentimental under the influence of her favourite beverage.

"Take another glass, Catherine, and then there's something I want to say to you," commenced her companion.

Mrs. Burlston complied without the least reluctance, and then said:

"Well, what is it?"

"Catherine, a fine young woman like you oughn't to be a widow."

"Go on, now!" retorted the lady.

The gentleman took her literally.

"Should you be very angry if I was to ask you to alter the spelling of your name—your surname, Catherine?"

"Why, what do you mean, Jem?"

Jem's reply was to bring his arm right round the lady's waist, and to say:

"What should you say to beginning it with an S now?"

Silence.

"And going on with an M, and then an I, and then a T, and finally winding up with an H?"

Silence still.

"What should you say to me if I was to ask you before very long to call yourself Mrs. Smith, my dear?"

"Oh, Jem, you don't mean it!"

But when Jem proved that he did mean it, by a method of demonstration not included in Aristotle's logic, yet with which that great writer was perfectly familiar, as there is every reason to suppose from other passages in his works, when Jem rose to the occasion, and bestowed a gallant salute upon her matronly countenance, Mrs. Burlston betrayed absolutely no resentment whatever. In short, within a very few minutes the pair were as thoroughly settled down as if they had been engaged for ten years, or, better still, been married for a similar period.

Mr. Smith took the occasion to inform the widow that he had brought savings to the amount of four hundred pounds with him from New Zealand. And then, with a curiosity which was doubtless natural, however wanting in good taste, he began to sound his future spouse on certain unexplained points in her own situation.

He commenced with a reference to his predecessor.

"What was really the matter between you and Burlston?" he asked.

"He was a brute," she answered. "He got to know I had a pension, and that's why he married me. He told me so himself afterwards."

"Shameful! As if your face wasn't enough for him!" cried the amorous Jem.

"And then, when I wouldn't tell him where the money came from, he took to bullying me awful. He said he knew I had a secret, and have that secret out of me he would. Why, he's beaten me sometimes till I could hardly stand."

"And why didn't you tell him?"

"Because I'd promised not to. They'd have cut off the pension directly. Besides, I didn't dare trust Burlston, he was that rash and violent. He'd have tried to get more money out of it, and then there'd have been an exposure, or something awful. Oh, I shudder to think what would have happened if that man had lived much longer."

"Should you have told him, do you think?"

"I should have had to, to save my own life. He'd been threatening to kill me several times lately, and he was the man to do it, too, when the drink was on him."

"Then if his death was an accident, it was a very lucky accident for some people."

Catherine turned pale.

"What do you mean?" she hoarsely muttered. "Of course it was an accident."

"So I've always heard," was the ambiguous reply. "But you're not taking anything."

And Jim forced another tumbler of gin and water into her not too reluctant hands. While she sipped it [illegible] observed:

"Well, Catherine, you shall never have to say that [illegible] to get your secret out of you. I've secrets of my own, enough and to spare, as it is. Why, I could tell you things about some of the people round here that would astonish you—things that nobody dreams of."

"Tell me, what are they?" said Catherine, eagerly rising to the bait.

By this time her voice had become thickened by the quantity she had drunk. Mr. Smith, too, spoke with a certain looseness which seemed inconsistent with strict sobriety.

"Oh, I daresay," he now responded, with a rather maudlin wink. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. You tell me who gives you that pension and I'll tell you something that'll interest you about Miss Grosse."

The widow started. For a moment she seemed to vacillate, but her will power had deserted her, and she yielded to the voice of the tempter. Like the traveller in the fable, she had withstood the force of the storm only to give way at the first approach of milder influences.

"Well, Jem," she said, "you're a different sort of fellow from Burlston, and I b'lieve I can trust you. You swear not t' tell anybody?"

"Never. I swear it."

"And you'll never let 'em know I've told you."

"Not on any account."

"Then I'll tell you. I get fifty pounds a year, paid reg'lar, from——"

"Sir Arthur Redleigh!" broke in her listener impatiently, as she hesitated over the name.

The woman stared at him with a dull surprise.

"Why, wharever's put that into your head?" she mumbled. "Wharever's he got t' do with it?"

This time it was the man's turn to be surprised. He could hardly conceal his confusion, and wished he had bitten his tongue before he ventured on the interruption. At length he pulled himself together, and asked:

"Well, who is it then?"

"Mr. Grosse," was the reply.

Jem drew a deep breath, and struck his forehead with his hand. For a minute he was too much overwhelmed with his thoughts to utter a syllable, but as soon as he could collect himself he said, in as matter-of-fact a tone as he could command:

"And why does he pay you?"

Catherine was intoxicated by this time, but not too intoxicated to perceive where she stood at this question. Closing her lips tightly, she shook her head at her questioner, and then muttered:

"That's what you'll never know."

At this moment, while the man was regarding her with the look of one doubtful as to his best course to pursue, there suddenly came a loud knock at the door.

The pair started to their feet. For a moment neither moved. Then Smith, who had suddenly recovered his sobriety, darted to the opposite door, and opened it.

The boy Martin stood outside, looking as white as a ghost.

"Oh, Mr. Smith, have you heard the news?" he exclaimed, as soon as he saw the keeper.

"No; what is it?"

"A telegram has just come to Sir Arthur. Lady Redleigh is dead!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### A PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

"A MAN named Smith wants to see your lordship."

Lord Fatheringham looked up.

"Smith? What Smith? I can't see him. Who is he?"

"He looks like a gamekeeper, my lord; but I don't know where he comes from."

"Ask him what his business is. I can't be troubled like this."

The servant bowed and departed. The next minute he was back again.

"He says, my lord, that he particularly wants to see your lordship, and that he has a letter from the Rev. Mr. Copingstone."

"From Mr. Copingstone! Why didn't he say that at once? Show him in."

And the next moment Mr. Smith and his lordship were closeted together.

"I haven't been able to get over before," said Mr. Smith, as he took a seat, "and I was afraid to write to your lordship, because one never knows what may become of letters, especially in these country villages, where the post-office people aren't always to be trusted."

"Why, then you are—" commenced the Earl.

"Mr. Wright, of course," completed the detective, whom the reader has no doubt recognised long ago.

"And what have you been doing all this time?"

"Courting Mrs. Burlston, principally."

The Earl bestowed a glance of respectful admiration upon his agent.

"You don't say so! And where are you staying, then?"

"At the lodge with her. I am Sir Arthur's gamekeeper."

This time the Earl was fairly astonished.

"I think your lordship said that Mrs. Burlston nursed the late Lord East when he died?"

"Yes, that is so," answered the Earl, frowning slightly.

"Who was the doctor in attendance?"

"Dr. Druscott, the local man, was there from the first; Sir Benjamin Stevens came down, but he was too late to do anything. My son died within a few hours of his arrival."

"Ah! Is your lordship on friendly terms with Mr. Druscott still? Could you give me a letter of introduction to him, for instance?"

"Certainly I could. He is my medical man on any slight occasion. But why do you want to see him?"

"To gain some more information about Catherine Burlston. I have gone far enough to feel certain that that woman holds the key to the mystery of her husband's death. Why, and in what way, I have not yet been able to make clear, even to myself, but I think the doctor may possibly be of some use to me."

Lord Fatheringham at once went to his desk, and wrote the required letter. In it he stated that anything Dr. Druscott could do for the bearer would be a service rendered to the Earl himself.

"Now I mayn't see you again just yet, my lord, because I'm going down to Scotland for a time."

The Earl started.

"To Scotland! What's that for?"

"I'm going to pay a visit to the asylum where Lady Redleigh was confined."

"*Was* confined? What do you mean?" cried the Earl, excitedly, starting up from his seat.

"Hasn't your lordship heard the news? Lady Redleigh died yesterday."

Lord Fatheringham fell back into his chair with a deep groan.

"Too late, too late!" he ejaculated, covering his face with his hands. Then he suddenly sprang to his feet, and drew himself up to his full height, with an expression of vigour and determination of which the detective had not believed him capable.

"There has been some black work going on!" he cried in firm tones. "I ought to have anticipated it, but, by Heaven, I will see that it is avenged. I said that I would spend five thousand in bringing that villain to justice, but I will do more—I will set to work myself to unmask him. Give me some part to play, set me some task, and you shall see that I have still enough youth and strength left to cope with this monster."

The detective listened in amazement to this unexpected outburst. Gathering his thoughts together, he replied:

"Your lordship has come to the very conclusion that I have been tempted to myself. In fact, it is to satisfy myself on the point that I am going down to Scotland."

"But how do you know where to go?" put in the Earl.

"Oh, I have been there once already," was the answer, and Mr. Wright proceeded to give the substance of his adventures on that occasion.

Lord Fatheringham listened with the deepest interest, but when the narrator came to the point where he was taken to see Lady Redleigh in the padded room, his hearer stopped him.

"No, no; don't tell me about that. I would rather not hear it."

The detective yielded to the injunction, and concluded his story.

Then the Earl said:

"And now, what do you propose to do?"

"I propose to enter the asylum, my lord?"

"In the capacity of a keeper?"

"No, my lord; in the capacity of a lunatic."

"As a lunatic! But you will be under restraint."

"To some extent, yes. But I shall be absolutely free from suspicion, and I may be able to pick up things from my fellow-patients which I could never get at in any other capacity."

"True, true. And how shall you set to work to get admitted?"

"That is the only part of my plan that I have not completed. I must get someone to take me down, with forged medical certificates; someone whom I can summon at a moment's notice when I want to be released."

"That shall be my part," exclaimed the Earl, well pleased.

But the detective shook his head.

"I think your lordship had better be here, watching the course of events. Besides, any sudden movement on your lordship's part would be sure to attract attention, and perhaps put the enemy on his guard. You see such a coincidence is in itself enough to arouse suspicion in a case of this kind. I should have thought nothing of Lady Redleigh's death if it hadn't followed so closely upon Burlston's, and upon Sir Arthur's visit to the asylum."

The Earl heard him reluctantly.

"But then what will you do? We don't want to take a number of people into our confidence."

"True, my lord; but I have in my mind a young gentleman who is mixed up in the affair a little as it is, I suspect, and whom I think we could thoroughly rely upon. In fact, I was going to ask if you could give me any sort of introduction to him."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Mr. Haworthy."

"Haworthy? Why he is my godson. I haven't seen him lately, but we are very good friends, and he would certainly be inclined to oblige me. But whatever has he got to do with it?"

"Perhaps nothing, perhaps a good deal. All I know is that his engagement with Miss Grosse was broken off only a week before Lady Redleigh's death."

"Good gracious, man! You don't mean——"

"I do."

"Impossible! No, I won't believe that of Grosse, much as I dislike him."

"We shall see, my lord. Meanwhile, if you will give me a note to Mr. Haworthy, I had better lose no time in setting to work."

Lord Fatheringham wrote the second note as requested and then the detective took his departure, leaving his noble employer buried in the gloomiest meditations.

He first took his way to the doctor's house, which was situated just at the entrance to the village of Haughton.

Dr. Druscott received him civilly, and seemed a little awed and frightened by the Earl's brief note.

"What can I do for you?" he inquired when he had finished reading it.

"Well, sir, I may as well tell you that I'm Sir Arthur Redleigh's new keeper."

Dr. Druscott started.

"Have you come in Burlston's place?" he said.

"Partly, sir. The fact is, Sir Arthur's second keeper left him directly after, and now I'm the only one he's got just at present."

"Yes, I see. Well?"

"And I'm living in the lodge with Mrs. Burlston."

"Go on."

"And her and me being very friendly, and not seeing why we shouldn't be more so, have agreed to make a match of it."

"Whew! That's rather quick work," said the doctor looking curiously at his visitor.

"Well, sir, the fact is, she's got a little bit of money, and I've got a little bit of money, and we think of going and taking a public somewhere about."

"Yes, well, what's all that got to do with me?"

"It's just this, sir. I'm a stranger in these parts, and I don't know much about the people. Now, I found out before I'd known Catherine very long that she had something on her mind. She drinks a good deal, and they tell me she took to it since she left off being a nurse. Now, I heard that the last person she nursed was Lord East, and I went to Lord Fatheringham to make some inquiries, and he sent me on to you, sir."

"Well, what do you want to know?" said Dr. Druscott, in a discouraging tone.

"Why, you see, sir, I think a husband ought to know something about his wife's past. I can't help thinking there is some trouble connected with that illness of Lord

East, and I thought you might be able to set my mind at rest about it."

Dr. Druscott seemed anything but pleased by the request.

"That's a pretty cool thing to ask," he observed. "Even supposing I knew anything about Mrs. Burlston, what right have you, a perfect stranger, to come and ask me about it? You are not her husband yet."

Mr. Smith put on an aggrieved air.

"Oh, very well, sir, if it's such a dreadful mystery as all that. It was Lord Fatheringham sent me here; he said you would do what you could for me."

This served to remind Dr. Druscott of the Earl's letter, which was certainly couched in rather pressing terms. He thought over the matter for a few seconds, and then said:

"Well, my man, if you assure me that your motives in coming here are perfectly honest and straightforward——"

Here he was interrupted by the protestations of Mr. Smith.

"Very good, then, to oblige Lord Fatheringham, I will tell you this much. I was not satisfied with Mrs. Burlston's—Catherine Wiseman, she was then—conduct at the time of Lord East's death. I doubt if he could have been saved by the most careful nursing, but I considered she was wanting in proper care. And as it was on my recommendation that she had been employed, I took it so much to heart that I threatened to have her removed from the institution to which she was attached. And the upshot was that she agreed to retire altogether from the profession. She married Burlston just after that, and I never heard anything more about her till this accident to her husband."

Seeing that there was no more to be got out of the doctor, Mr. Smith expressed himself thankful and satisfied, and took his leave.

He proceeded straight to the Polar Bear, where he demanded a dogcart to be prepared for his immediate use. He had not long to wait, and was soon bowling along at a round pace in the direction of Fatheringham.

An hour and a half's drive brought the detective to the gates of a pleasantly-situated demesne, a few miles beyond Fatheringham, which was pointed out to him as Mr. Haworthy's abode. He drove up to the front door, got out, and rang the bell.

It was answered by a servant, who took Lord Fatheringham's note, and went inside.

He returned in a very short time, and, addressing the visitor with some show of respect, requested him to come into Mr. Haworthy's presence.

Mr. Haworthy was standing in travelling dress upon the hearthrug of the room into which the detective was ushered. All around him lay a disorder of bags, rugs, overcoats, and other kinds of baggage. On the table were some labels on which the quick eye of the new arrival caught the word "Bergen" in bold letters. Evidently Mr. Haworthy was on the very eve of a Continental tour.

His first words confirmed this impression.

"You're just in time to catch me," he said. "I'm off in half an hour's time for Norway."

The detective gazed full at him for a second, and then said, slowly and distinctly:

"No, sir, you are not going to Norway. You are going to Scotland."

"What do you mean? Is this a joke, or what is it?"

"I will explain myself, sir. I will do so in the fullest manner I can, and if I have to leave any point dark for the present, I must ask you to excuse me on the ground that the affairs of others are concerned."

"Why, who and what are you?"

"I am a detective from Scotland Yard. My name is Wright, and I am engaged, at Lord Fatheringham's instigation, in bringing home to Sir Arthur Redleigh the wilful murder of his gamekeeper, Burlston."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the other. "I felt there was something dark about that business all along!"

"Up to the present my investigations have had two results. I have ascertained that the removal of Burlston may have been desired—I only say may have been—by a certain third party, who has been paying a secret pension to Mrs. Burlston for some years. I have also ascertained that immediately after the inquest Sir Arthur went down to Scotland and had an interview with his wife, which resulted in throwing her into a frenzy, which I was informed by the people at the asylum was the invariable result of his visits. But up to the present I have not succeeded in establishing any connection between the two sets of circumstances. I have just come from an interview with Dr. Druscott——"

"Druscott of Haughton?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"Very well; we were friends at Cambridge."

"Were you? I wish I had known that earlier. Perhaps your influeuce would have made him a little more communicative."

"Why, what did you want him to tell you?"

"That is one of the points I would rather you asked me nothing about just yet. The most important business at present is about Lady Redleigh."

"Lady Redleigh! What about her?"

"Of course, you haven't heard it yet, either. She is just dead."

"Dead! That beautiful girl! Dead!" Young Haworthy was quite overcome.

"I see you are interested in her fate, sir."

"Ah, who wouldn't be, that knew her three years ago as Laura Brown; the loveliest creature that God ever made, as we all thought her then."

"And as she was still, two weeks ago, when I saw her," added the detective.

"So you've seen her, Mr. Wright?"

"Yes." And Mr. Wright gave a brief account of his journey to Auchtertown.

"Well," said the other when he had finished, "but what do you propose to go there again for?"

"I will tell you. There was one very remarkable point which attracted my attention during the brief time I spent in the asylum, and it is this. Mr. Graham, the assistant, who took me round under the impression that I was a friend of Sir Arthur's—or Mr. Robins, as he seems to be known as there—used these words in speaking of Lady Redleigh, as near as I can recollect:—'The remarkable thing about it is that she is, and always has been, in wonderful health physically.' Yet, the proprietor, Dr. Raebell, who must, of course, know Sir Arthur by his real name, and who was, moreover, aware that I was a stranger to him, used these words to me, and used them, mind, *after* his private conversation with Sir Arthur:—'That woman suffers from a deep-seated and dangerous malady which may carry her off at any moment, literally at any moment.'"

"That is certainly a strange contradiction," observed Haworthy.

"Very strange. And now mark this. Not only did my own view of Lady Redleigh go to confirm the first account—of course, as I'm not a medical man, that counts for very little—but the assistant could have had no possible motive in deceiving me."

"And what motive could the other have?"

"I am coming to that. I had appeared at the asylum in the character of one who had a relation to place there. Consequently Dr. Raebell must have expected to see me there again, and perhaps more than once. If, therefore—and again I only say if—if he at that time contemplated the possibility of what has since occurred, it would be natural—I won't go so far as to say prudent—but it would at least be consistent with such an anticipation on his part that he should prepare me to find the patient in whom I had shown some interest no more when I came to the place again."

Mr. Haworthy followed this chain of reasoning with close attention, and could find no flaw in it.

"Then your theory as to Lady Redleigh's death is ——?"

"At present I have formed no theory, sir. My position simply is that the matter demands investigation, and that Lord Fatheringham's earnest wish is that you should give me the necessary assistance." And he sketched out the plan of campaign.

"Well," hesitated the other, "as you see, I was off to Norway."

"You were off to Norway, sir, because you believed that all was over between Miss Grosse and yourself," said the detective boldly. "Come to Scotland with me, and I pledge you my word that your former happiness shall yet be restored."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DIARY OF A LUNATIC.

DEAR me! I find I haven't written a word in my diary since I finished the account of my last visit to Dr. Raebell. It seems like fate that I should take it up again now that I am under his care.

Well, I haven't the patience to go very far back over the ground.

A piece of well-timed impertinence secured my dismissal from Sir Arthur Redleigh. I had an affecting parting with Catherine, but as I can't afford to lose sight of her I arranged for a correspondence to the post-office at Stalne, and told her to expect me back as soon as I'd got hold of a suitable public-house for us to set up in.

Coming down in the train Mr. Haworthy and I discussed our plans. It was agreed that I was to be his elder brother, and that we were to be residents in Glasgow.

"We shall have to get our medical certificates there," I said, "so we must go into furnished rooms the moment we arrive. We must also go and get some women's clothes."

"What for?" he added, in some surprise.

"Because I intend to enter the women's side of the asylum," I answered. "That will give me the best opportunities for making my inquiries."

"But you don't expect to deceive the proprietor, do you? Surely he, as a medical man, will see through your disguise?

"Undoubtedly, and therefore the disguise must not be maintained towards him. My scheme is very simple. As a lunatic I must be under a hallucination of some kind. Well, my idea is to represent that my madness takes the form of believing myself a woman, any woman, it doesn't matter whom, say Mary, Queen of Scots. You must take me to the place in that capacity, and explain to Dr. Raebell that the thing that provokes me to wildest frenzy is being treated like a man. On those grounds you must make it a condition of my entrance that I am put on the women's side, and that everyone is to be given to understand that I am a woman."

He listened approvingly, and praised the scheme.

I then went into some other details, and, in fact, we talked of little else the whole way down.

Every now and then, however, I observed that my companion's attention was wandering. He was thinking of the events of the last few days, and brooding, doubtless, over my confident promise on the eve of our journey.

We got to Glasgow in the middle of the night, and went to an hotel, the one I had stayed at before.

As soon as ever the shops were open in the morning we were out again, and looking, first for furnished rooms in a fairly good neighbourhood, and secondly for a theatrical costumier's, where I could obtain some sets of female clothing to fit me. These objects attained, we had to go to a distinctly feminine establishment and order quantities of articles, which, as I am not a married man, it brought a fiery blush to my cheek to even look at.

As for putting them on—well, there!

As soon as I was properly attired and settled down in our new rooms, Haworthy started out for the doctors. In about half-an-hour he returned with two men of imposing appearance, who gazed at me on entering as if I were some new kind of dog and they were a little doubtful whether I bit.

I bowed to the first one graciously, and observed in a confident voice:

"Ha! my Lord Bothwell, how goes it? We are pleased to have you here."

Then, turning to the other, I pretended to start back in indignation.

"What! presumptuous man, what dost thou here? We are tired of thy preaching, and will have no more. Leave the presence, I say!"

The poor man seemed considerably disconcerted by this attack, and kept at the other end of the room. His colleague advanced.

"You do not look well," he said, "let me feel your pulse."

"What, Bothwell turned leech?" I said, laughing. "Nay, bold man, send some proper physician here if thou art afeard of me." And I dodged his hand.

I suppose it was a mere form, for he didn't press it. Meanwhile I threw such furious looks at the poor man whom I pretended to take for Knox, that he was afraid to come two yards beyond the door. I could hear Haworthy assuring him in low tones that I was never violent, unless people treated me as a man.

Then Lord Bothwell ventured to tread on the delicate ground. He said to me:

"Excuse me, sir, but——"

I let him get no further. I jumped out of my chair and began to rave and storm in such a way that he darted to the door and out of the room without more ado. Poor John Knox, I believe, was already half way down the street.

However, we had accomplished our object, and we set out by the next train for Stirling.

It was growing dusk when we drove up to the outer gates of Dr. Raebell's premises. To my view, whether it was fancy or not, a chill gloom seemed to hang over the place and give it quite a different character to what it bore on my last visit.

We were received by the doctor in the same study, but the prints didn't seem quite so cheerful this time, and I noticed a deposit of dust of some weeks' standing in the saucer out of which the eagle was taking his refreshment.

Dr. Raebell noticed the direction of my eyes, and almost before we were seated he began:

"Ah, I see you looking at that group—a replica, of course, not an original; my emoluments here do not admit of that. You observe the idea, no doubt. The eagle, unchained, is reconciled to its captivity by the loving attentions of its captor—an emblem, I would observe, of the system pursued in this establishment."

Haworthy, who had not heard this touching little speech before, was visibly impressed by it, and, as far as I could see, he formed a very favourable opinion of our host. It is true that he has since assured me that he was only acting his part.

As soon as Dr. Raebell had relieved his mind of the burden upon it, I fixed my eyes upon his face, and observed in the most matter-of-fact tones I could command, "I am Mary, Queen of Scots."

I suppose he was used to receiving disclosures of a similar kind, for he showed no discomposure. He simply said:

"Oh, indeed," as if I had mentioned that my name was Smith; and then he turned for an explanation to my companion.

"I have persuaded the Queen to come here for a short time," said Haworthy, "in order to be in safety from her enemies——"

"Yes," I interrupted, "Queen Elizabeth is after me. Do you know Queen Elizabeth?"

"I have often heard of her," replied the doctor, in a soothing, unctuous voice, "but she never comes near here."

"Perhaps you will let her Majesty retire with one of your women," Haworthy resumed, "while I explain the situation to you."

The other nodded and rang the bell. A man, who was no doubt a keeper, entered, and Dr. Raebell bade him fetch Mrs. Ferrier.

"She is our lady superintendent," he explained to Haworthy, "a most trustworthy person, and kind to a fault." Mrs. Ferrier did not look kind to a fault. Mrs. Ferrier did not look kind at all.

She was certainly over fifty, and I could not believe that she had ever looked good-natured, even at fifteen. It was not that her hair was badly dyed, and that her acquired teeth did not fit well, nor yet that one of her eyes showed a slight difference of opinion from the other as to the direction in which any given object was situated. Nor was it the gloomy draperies in which she enshrouded her person, nor the unpleasantly aggressive way in which she planted her feet upon the floor in walking. It was an undefinable something lurking in her whole expression and in every look and movement which she made that turned me against her, and reminded me involuntarily of the lines in Shakespeare—

> A fellow by the hand of nature marked,
> Quoted, and signed to do a deed of shame.

The mere sight of her was enough to cast a gloom upon my spirits. And when I reflected that the lovely Lady Redleigh had been in her charge, had spent her last hours under her surveillance, had died, perhaps, with no one else by to watch her last breath, I felt a fierce determination to probe the matter to the very bottom, and to drag out to the light of day the iniquity which I suspected had been perpetrated within those walls.

I followed Mrs. Ferrier out of the room, and by the same route by which Dr. Graham had led me on my former visit into the part of the building reserved for fresh inmates, leaving Haworthy to tell the doctor the story previously agreed on between us.

As soon as the door was closed behind us, I fancied I could detect a change in the manner of my conductress. As long as my supposed relative's eye was on her she had striven to maintain a semblance of amiability. It is true that the attempt made her look, if possible, falser and more repellent than I found her in repose, but still it was disagreeable to find that she did not think it worth while to continue even the attempt out of any consideration for her patient.

However, I kept my reflections to myself, and followed her into a small sitting-room, which was apparently reserved for her own use. When we got inside she said:

"Sit down."

It was an order, not an invitation. I obeyed it in silence, wondering, rather, whether a real lunatic would have resented such a tone.

"What's your name?" she said next.

"Mary, Queen of Scots," I answered, submissively enough.

"Oh, bother, I don't want that," she grumbled. "What's your friend's name? The man that came here with you?"

I hesitated for a moment, in doubt whether to christen him by the name of some historical personage, or to give the name he had arranged to assume with the proprietor. But I felt that it would be troublesome to have to keep up a system of insane nomenclature, so I took the simpler course of saying:

"That was Mr. Armytage."

"Oh, then I suppose you're Mrs. Armytage," she muttered. Then all at once she seemed struck by something in my voice, for she stopped short, and began to stare at me very hard.

I saw the secret of my sex was about to be penetrated, and I got ready for the proper demonstration. In a minute she exclaimed:

"You talk like a man!"

"Wretch!" I screamed, getting up and waving my hands frantically. "Beldame, thou liest! Away! Out of my sight. What ho! Where is Bothwell?"

If I had expected Mrs. Ferrier to turn tail like John Knox in the morning, I should have been woefully disappointed.

"Hold your tongue," she said, sternly, "unless you want the strait-waistcoat already."

"Strait-waistcoat! What do you mean?" I cried. "Where am I? Isn't this Lochleven Castle?"

"No, it isn't. It's Dr. Raebell's house, where you have come for the benefit of your health, and if you ever want to go away again the less you say about Mary, Queen of Scots, and such rubbish, the better."

I tried to look crushed and bewildered by this intelligence. And I think I must have succeeded pretty well, for she took a regular keeper-to-patient tone with me after

I was taking my bonnet off, at Mrs. Ferrier's suggestion, when Dr. Raebell came in. His manner, at all events, had undergone no change. No doubt it was his policy to train the patients to look upon him as a friend and protector from the harsher subordinates. By this means he would show to advantage when their friends came to the place.

He came in smiling—no doubt Haworthy had proved thoroughly complaisant on the question of terms—and addressed me in the tone usually employed to humour a fretful child.

"Well, and how is our Majesty? Are we feeling rested after our journey? No sign of Queen Elizabeth, eh?"

Mrs. Ferrier sniffed defiantly at these remarks. I found myself again wondering whether a genuine lunatic would be taken in by such flimsy hypocrisy, but I concluded that the doctor probably knew his business, and had tested this sort of treatment before with success.

So I answered graciously. I did not even lodge a complaint against Mrs. Ferrier's previous behaviour, reflecting that maniacs are proverbially cunning, and that it would be bad policy to offend her.

Dr. Raebell then proceeded to inform her that I was to have a private bedroom in that wing, and to take my meals, and be treated generally like the other ladies in his establishment.

Finally, he led me into the drawing-room, where I had my first glimpse of the beautiful woman whose fate had brought me hither. There most of the female patients were assembled, waiting for the moment of dinner, and he presented me to them under my fancy personality.

I could not pick up all the names of those who were in turn presented to me. But the one that interested me most was a delicate young girl of not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, who was introduced to me as Ophelia.

The reason that she attracted me so much at first was because I saw her sending from her side as I came up the very child whom I had seen on my last visit being nursed by Lady Redleigh herself.

I thought it a good opening to say:

"Whose little girl is that?"

"The gardener's," answered Ophelia in a soft, winning voice. "I have always been very fond of her, and she has taken to me lately, since her friend died."

"What friend was that?" I asked. But I knew what the answer would be.

"Mrs. Robins. She died three days ago. They buried her yesterday."

I saw she was a simple, trustful little creature, who would not be quick to detect inconsistencies. So I said to her:

"I wonder if that was the Mrs. Robins I used to know. She was a very lovely woman, quite young, with dark hair——"

"That's the one!" she interrupted, eagerly. "Were you a friend of hers?"

"I was very much interested in her," I answered, cautiously.

Ophelia looked earnestly at me for a moment, and then said in low tones:

"If you are a friend of hers, then I think I will tell you a secret about her. But you mustn't tell it to anybody else, will you?"

"Certainly not."

"Especially not to Mrs. Ferrier?"

"Not on any account. Nor to Dr. Raebell."

She glanced round to see the coast was clear, then bent her lips close to my ear and whispered:

"It's a dreadful thing to have on my mind, and I daren't trust it to anybody else. You know that Mrs. Robins died and was buried yesterday?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, she has come to life again since they buried her, and all last night I could hear her knocking against the lid of her coffin!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### A DESPERATE ERRAND.

I CONCLUDED the last instalment of my diary with the startling words of the poor little mad woman, Ophelia. Though I attached no real importance to them, yet I cannot deny that they produced a weird effect on my nerves. But there is something in the very atmosphere of a place like this enough to tell on the strongest mind.

After dinner we all returned together to the drawing-room, and I tried to renew my conversation with the poor girl about the supposed Mrs. Robins.

But whether she had repented already of her hasty confidence in me, or whether she was really unable to command her wits sufficiently except at irregular intervals, I could get nothing out of her at all. So I drifted off to one or two of the others, and delicately sounded them.

So far as I could see, Lady Redleigh had not been a favourite among her fellow-patients, at least on the women's side. I remember Dr. Graham's telling me on a former occasion of her great reserve towards them, and no doubt this accounted for the fact that the great number of those I questioned seemed to know and care hardly anything about their late associate.

After several fruitless attempts it occurred to me that as Graham himself had shown some good feeling towards his patient, it might be worth while to try and broach the subject to him. He was not in the room, so I went up to the formidable Mrs. Ferrier, who was presiding in one corner, and said:

"Can you tell me, madam, whether Dr. Graham will favour us with his society this evening?"

That woman was as sharp as a needle. She was down on me instantly:

"Dr. Graham? Who told you about Dr. Graham? You've never seen him, have you?"

I saw at once what a mistake I had made; but instantly recovering myself, I answered:

"No, I have not seen him, but I have heard about him from Queen Victoria—the Queen Victoria in the brown dress, with red hair."

I had fallen already into the way of calling the patients by the names they laid claim to. I found the system universal, and it was very useful, as it spared everybody's feelings, and put us on an equality all round. Of course each one believed that he or she was the only genuine one, and that all the others were impostors.

"Queen Victoria had better mind her own business," said Mrs. Ferrier, snappishly. "Dr. Graham's been gone more than a fortnight."

"Left for good, do you mean?" I cried, my heart sinking at this coincidence.

"Yes, or for bad," was the tart response.

Trying to extract information out of that woman was like trying to shave with a lodging-house carving-knife—an operation attended with more pain than profit.

Just at this time the door opened to admit Dr. Raebell, who was followed by all the gentlemen under treatment in the house. Apparently this social meeting was a recognised institution, for they all quickly formed groups with the ladies, and cheerful conversation became general all around me.

As I saw the proprietor slowly making his way towards Mrs. Ferrier, I stepped forward to intercept him.

"Ah!" he exclaimed presently, as he caught sight of me, "and how are we now? Does your Majesty find my poor abode come up to your expectations?"

I replied graciously that I was more than satisfied, and then went on.

"You know, doctor, that most of the people here are mad, quite mad."

"I'm afraid so," he answered.

"You see that woman over there with red hair—no, I don't mean Mrs. Maybrick, I mean that one by the window—she claims to be Queen Victoria; now that's absurd."

"Quite so. Undoubtedly it is so. The only thing is to humour the poor thing—take pity on her and humour her."

"Yes, but it is so very absurd, you know. She can't possibly be Queen Victoria, because Mary, Queen of Scots, died long before Queen Victoria was born, and as I'm Mary, Queen of Scots, of course Queen Victoria *isn't* born yet."

"Very true. I agree with you. She must be mistaken," he said in his most soothing tones.

"And that isn't all. She says there is a Dr. Graham here, but that's wrong again. Now I want to know about Dr. Graham, because I suspect him of being a spy from Queen Elizabeth. Where is this man?"

I spoke quite fiercely. Dr. Raebell continued to soothe me.

"Oh, he's gone. I sent him away some time before you came."

"Why did you send him away?"

"Oh, not for any particular reason, except that I wanted to change. His successor will be here in a few days, and I have reason to know that he hates Queen Elizabeth like poison."

I professed myself pleased at this information, and then allowed the proprietor to shake me off.

Finding Ophelia still unresponsive, I made my way to the side of one of the gentlemen. As I drew near he made a gesture to keep me off:

"Don't come too close, ma'am," he said, "and whatever you do, don't breathe on me, or I shall melt. You know I am made of butter."

"Dear me!" I exclaimed, keeping my distance. "I am very sorry to hear that. What personage are you?"

He smiled scornfully.

"Oh, I don't set up to be anybody but plain James Fraser, of Dumbarton. I'm not one of these poor things. I'm not mad, you know."

"I see!" I murmured, trying to look as if I thought so all along.

"I am simply here for safety," he explained. "You see, if I went about freely people might breathe on me, or squeeze me, or something, and that would be fatal. Now, if I stay here long enough, the doctor thinks I shall gradually harden into cheese. That will be a great improvement, you see."

"Quite so," I said, falling into much the same sort of tone which Dr. Raebell had used towards myself just before. "You will be much less liable to melt then."

"Yes, it will be much more comfortable in many ways. The only danger then will be from the mice. You know mice are very fond of cheese."

"Are they indeed?"

"Yes, and that makes me very nervous. It would be so painful to be eaten by mice. I dread it very much. Dr. Graham promised to construct a wire netting for me to wear, so as to keep them away, but now he's left, and I don't know what I shall do."

"Was he a nice man?"

"Yes, very nice. So honest and trustworthy, and so careful about the patients. The poor things were quite fond of him. He used to humour them, you know, pretend to believe in them, and that's what mad people like. I always do it myself on that account. And then he took such care of them. I don't believe poor Mrs. Robins would have died if he had stayed on."

I pricked up my ears pretty sharply at this.

"Don't you; why not?" I said.

"Because he always took such particular care of her. And, besides, she didn't look ill. She looked just as well the last time I saw her as she ever did all the time she was here. I came here just before her, you know. I've been here over three years now. You see, it takes a long time for butter to harden."

I listened with breathless interest. Evidently this man, Fraser, or whatever his name was, had taken more interest in Mrs. Robins than her female fellow-patients, with the exception of Ophelia. I asked him:

"And when did you last see her?"

"Only a week before her death. She was in this room that night, behaving as usual, and not looking the least unwell. The next day she was missing, and we were told that she had been suddenly taken ill, and couldn't leave her room. Within a week she was dead. Very strange, wasn't it?"

"Very strange indeed. What was Mrs. Robins like? In character, I mean?"

"Ah, she was a very sweet woman. I didn't know her well; no one did, because she made a point of not associating more than she could help with the mad patients, and though she knew I wasn't mad she was afraid of causing jealousy by being too friendly with me. She has often told me so."

"But what was her reason for avoiding the others?"

"Why, because the poor thing thought that if she mixed too much with them she would lose her reason. Of course, she thought that she was perfectly sane—they all do. And upon my word, sir, if it hadn't been for her absurd belief that she was the Blessed Virgin, you would have sworn that she was as sane as I am myself."

I did not succeed in hearing anything more worth recording, and soon after I asked to be shown to my room. Fortunately, I have my portmanteau here, with a lock constructed on a principle known to only two other men in Europe beside myself, so my diary is safe from all but actual violence.

After breakfast and family prayers, conducted on our side of the house by Mrs. Ferrier, I took a walk through the grounds. Considerable liberty seemed to be allowed to the patients, none of whom, I suppose, were much given to violence. I spent my time in cultivating the friendship of a gardener, with a view to future emergencies. He seemed a good-natured, but stubborn sort of fellow, and I was glad to find that he was the father of Lady Redleigh's little pet. He referred to "Mrs. Robins" with tears in his eyes, and declared that the whole staff of the place, with the exception of Mrs. Ferrier, were devoted to her.

I gave him a sovereign in order to encourage a lively sense of favours to come. I took a good look round the premises at the same time. There was no mistaking their character. I was in a downright prison, without a chance of escape, so far as any ordinary individual was concerned. I looked over the bare, cheerless grounds, strewn with fallen leaves, and surrounded by their high stone wall, and reflected that the glorious creature whose fate I had come to ascertain, and, if necessary, avenge, had spent three years of her life in these gloomy precincts with no society but that of lunatics and keepers. It was a melancholy story.

In the afternoon I found my friend Ophelia in a communicative mood. The poor thing was walking about by herself, looking for the gardner's child, and I joined her in the search.

We were not successful, and returned indoors, as it was beginning to drizzle. Ophelia then offered to show me over the building, and we went through several rooms and passages.

At length we came to the end of a corrider which I seemed to remember. I was beginning to go down it when my companion clutched me by the sleeve and said, in agitated tones:

"Don't go down there!"

"Why not?" I said.

"That is the way to the padded room," she whispered, and gave a shudder.

I shuddered myself by the contagion of her dread. I now remembered perfectly having been taken along this passage on my former visit. But before turning away I noticed there were three doors altogether in the passage, and I asked Ophelia:

"What are those other rooms, though?"

"The one on the right is Dr. Graham's room; at least, it was when he was here. The other"— here her voice sank to a whisper—"is Mrs. Merchant's cell."

I was struck both by the change in her manner and the use of the word *cell* instead of room.

"Why, who is she, and why is she put there?" I said.

The girl looked at me wistfully as if asking to be spared the recital. But my curiosity had been too keenly aroused, and, besides, it was my duty to know everything that was to be known about the place I had come to.

"We don't often talk about her," said Ophelia, at length, drawing me away from the spot as she spoke; "it's too horrible. She is a raving maniac, with intervals of dull idiotic stupor. They never dare let her out, night or day, and some of the patients say she is always chained to the wall. There is no window to her room, because any sort of light makes her worse; so she spends her whole life in total darkness."

"Good gracious, how dreadful!" I exclaimed. "And how long has she been like that?"

"Twenty years," said Ophelia, trembling. "Oh, don't make me speak about it, it frightens me so. For I sometimes think"—and here again she lowered her voice to a whisper—"that when Mrs. Merchant dies they will put me in there."

It gave me quite a shock to hear the meek, pitiful-looking creature falter out this horrible suggestion. I did my best to soothe her and dispel her fears, but it was no use. The only thing I could think of to say was: "But Mrs. Merchant may not die for ever so many years."

"Oh, yes, she will; she is an old woman now. And the patients say that her son in Australia doesn't send the money for her very regularly, and that Dr. Raebell won't be sorry when she does die."

Poor Ophelia! I felt guilty of a sort of cruelty in having started the topic, and I tried to get her to talk of something else. But this was not to be done, and she gradually relapsed into the heavy state of the previous night.

I cannot very well account for it, but from the moment I heard this truly fearful story, a feeling began to take possession of me that I must see this Mrs. Merchant. She could hardly be of any use to me in my investigation, and yet something told me I ought not to neglect her. It was my duty to find out the smallest thing connected with the scene of Lady Redleigh's fate. And the very secrecy in which this wretched being's lot was shrouded exerted a fascination of its own over my mind, apart altogether from the quest I was engaged on.

I recalled, moreover, the fact that it was the following up of what appeared to be but a side issue from my original task that had brought me down to Dr. Raebell's at all. It was not for me to neglect anything, however seemingly useless. My mind was made up pretty soon. I would explore the forbidden corridor this very night.

I came in to bed early again, and employed my time in writing the preceding pages in my diary. I have made all the necessary preparations for an exploration. My all-important portmanteau has furnished me with a suit of man's clothes, a dark lantern, a pair of shoes with list soles, and a bunch of skeleton keys. Besides these, I have armed myself with a revolver, and a strong, serviceable knife.

* * * * *

I had laid down the pen and got out of my chair, when I noticed an unexpected and startling phenomenon. From the window of my room I overlook the wing in which the three rooms described by Ophelia are situated. I have just looked out, and I have seen that there is a light in Dr. Graham's chamber.

I know not what to think of this. It makes my task doubly difficult, yet it is in itself a mystery which I must solve at any cost.

Well, the next two hours will see me triumphant or——

## CHAPTER X.

### More Discoveries Than One.

Although the detective had tried to reassure himself in making the last entries in his diary, it was with a beating heart and uneasy mind that he covered the light in his dark lantern and moved towards the door of his room.

It was, of course, locked, but as the same key was used for all the doors, the key-hole was left free; and it was an easy matter for Wright to shoot back the bolt by means of one of the keys on his bunch.

Allowing only the very faintest gleam to escape from his lantern, he crept cautiously along the passage on which his bedroom opened. Then he descended a staircase, and worked his way round to the corridor leading into the wing for which he was bound.

He held his breath as he crept along towards the room from which the mysterious light proceeded. Arrived at the door, he put his ear to the keyhole and listened.

For some moments he heard nothing. Presently the soft, regular sound of deep breathing penetrated to his ear. Apparently the person in the room, whoever he might be, had fallen asleep without extinguishing the light. But the detective was determined not to act hastily, and he knelt at the door, listening for a full ten minutes before he ventured upon his next move.

This was to try the handle of the door. To his surprise it yielded at once. The inmate of the room had not locked it, nor had it been locked from outside.

This caused him to hesitate and reflect for another minute. Clearly the slumberer was not a patient. Who then could it be?

Probably Dr. Graham's successor, arrived that very night, was the solution that suggested itself to him. He opened the door, silently but boldly, and entered.

The room was lit merely by the faint gleam of a night-light, but to the detective's eyes, after groping his way through the dark passages, this was almost a dazzling illumination. Shading his eyes with one hand, he glanced towards the bed.

The sight that met his eyes drew from him a stifled exclamation. The artificial hair was gone, the lips had collapsed over the toothless gums, but still there was no mistaking the identity of the sleeper. It was Mrs. Ferrier.

What was she doing in this quarter of the building? Her room had been pointed out to him earlier in the day on the same corridor as his own. The change must have been sudden and secret.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he gradually became aware that the woman before him was awaking. First she shifted her position, and then she turned her head in his direction, and gradually unclosed her eyes.

It was a terrible moment for both. On his part the detective saw all his plans frustrated if the woman should scream loudly enough to bring attendants to the spot before he had time to escape. On her part, Mrs. Ferrier, hardly emerged from her slumbers, saw herself at the mercy of probably some escaped lunatic who might be bent on taking her life.

Fortunately for Wright, the woman's training had taught her that the most dangerous thing to do in a situation of the kind was to show signs of fear, or to scream for aid. She therefore collected herself quickly, and, fixing her eyes steadily on the intruder, began to slowly raise herself in the bed.

That line of conduct on her part saved the detective. Falling instantly into the part which he saw she had assigned him, he moved submissively towards her, like one who fears a mistress.

"Who are you?" said Mrs. Ferrier, in a firm voice.

For answer the detective dropped his lantern and gave one spring at his victim, round whose skinny throat his fingers were at once clasped. She had no time to shriek out, but she struggled with terrific energy, like one who believed that her last hour had come, and the detective had to fairly throttle her to save himself from having his eyes torn out.

The struggle did not last long, as might have been expected when a strong, active man was engaged against an old woman, however tough and wiry. As soon as her frantic efforts relaxed, Wright released her throat and manufactured a gag with the pillow and one of the sheets. He tied her arms firmly to her sides with another sheet, and ended by securing her tightly to the bed-post. Then, and not before, he threw a glass of water in her face, and she regained consciousness.

Her captor was now in something of a difficulty. He had got her in his power, and it seemed a splendid opportunity for dragging from her anything she knew as to Laura's fate. On the other hand, the first question on the subject would reveal that he was not the madman he seemed, and he might thus be destroying his chances for the future.

While he was deliberating what course to take, Mrs. Ferrier was coming to herself. The detective's keen eyes were upon her as she did so, and he noticed that her first movement on recovering consciousness was to glance, not at his own features, as would have seemed natural, but at a chest of drawers in a corner of the room.

For a man like Wright, who let nothing escape him, this glance was quite enough. Had Mrs. Ferrier said in so many words, "Don't touch that bureau," he would not have divined more readily that it contained something which she desired to conceal. Before the wretched woman had time to repent her rash impulse, he was before the piece of furniture, eagerly ransacking its contents.

The search did not take long. In the second drawer he pulled out he found a locked leather case, which he pounced upon and brought to the light. He saw that the lock was too small for any of his false keys to open, so he calmly took up the woman's dress and rummaged the pocket for her bunch of keys. It was the work of another instant to open the case, and the moment it was opened his eyes fell upon a prize that rewarded and justified all the steps he had taken to obtain it.

It was an oblong paper packet, on the cover of which, in a trembling feminine hand, these words were written:

"For the love of God! Forward this packet unopened to the Earl of Fatheringham, at Fatheringham Towers, Stalneshire."

Mrs. Ferrier had disobeyed one-half of this solemn injunction; she had not forwarded the packet. The detective disobeyed the other half, for he opened it without hesitation.

In doing this he felt himself doubly justified. In the first place he was the Earl's confidential agent, with implied authority to take any step that might seem advisable, and there was neither time nor opportunity to consult Lord Fatheringham himself. In the second place, he was an officer of the law, sworn to discover criminals and bring them to justice, and he held in his hands what was probably a most important clue to the crime of which he suspected Mrs. Ferrier and Mrs. Ferrier's master. Without stopping an instant, therefore, he tore open the envelope.

It contained a manuscript of some length. Glancing through it, he could see that the handwriting, comparatively firm in the beginning, grew more and more uncertain and shaky towards the close. He made up his mind to read it then and there. Shifting the night-light to a favourable position on a corner of the chest, he took up his position with his back to the light and his face towards his prisoner, so that the least movement o her part would attract his attention. And in t position, under those strange circumstances, alone at midnight with her suspected murderess, gagged and bound by his own hand, before him, in the most dismal quarter of the madhouse, where she had written it, he read Laura's last testament.

"Dear Lord Fatheringham," it began, "I implore you, do not throw this away as the writing of a madwoman. Read it to the end before you decide what to think of it and of me.

"I hope it will not offend you to receive this. You will wonder, no doubt, why I should address myself to you. Must I confess it? It is because I have no other friend in the world, except my father, and I dare not write to him. You will soon see why.

"This is at once a confession and an explanation. Let me, without spending any more words by way of introduction, come at once to my story.

"Probably, beyond the fact that I was the Rector of Haughton's daughter, that my name was coupled once for a short time with Lord East's, and that you met me on two occasions, once when you danced with me at the ball at Stalne, and once when I came to a garden party at the Towers, and you showed me some kindness, you know or remember nothing about me till my marriage with Sir Arthur Redleigh.

"You may have heard, though, that for the year or two before that marriage I had many admirers among the young men in the district. I was, in fact, what is called a belle. But after some time my father began to remark that I showed no preference for any of the men who paid attentions to me; and he spoke to me on the subject. He told me we were very poor (which I knew was true) and that my brother at Oxford was extravagant, and had involved himself in debt, and in fact he hinted pretty plainly that it was desirable that I should make a good match. I promised him that if I received an offer from anyone whom I could really care for I would accept it, and this put him off for a time.

"Soon after this Sir Arthur Redleigh began to call at the Rectory, and to behave towards me in a way that showed his intentions pretty plainly. I held him at a distance as long as I could, and finally I believe he consulted my father, and secured his goodwill by very lavish offers in the way of settlements. At all events, my father returned to the attack; only this time, instead of recommending marriage generally, he strongly urged me to accept Sir Arthur Redleigh. Sir Arthur had not at that time actually proposed to me, but of course there was no doubt in anyone's mind as to his readiness to do so if I gave him the opportunity.

"This time I thought I ought to speak plainly, and I told my father that I would not marry a man whom I did not love. I said I had no particular dislike for Sir Arthur Redleigh, for though he had the reputation of being a fast, drinking man, he had always conducted himself in my presence in the most unexceptionable manner. But I could not feel anything ever distantly resembling affection for him, and, therefore, I flatly refused to consider him as a possible husband.

"My father then pressed me to say whether there was any one for whom I had formed a secret preference, and I answered no. That was the only falsehood I ever told, except my lie at the altar when I promised to love Sir Arthur, and I have blamed myself bitterly for it since. Perhaps if I had summoned up courage to tell my father the truth he would have forborne to urge me into this marriage, and I should have been spared all the misery I have had to undergo.

"At this distance of time and of place, cut off as I am from all rational human intercourse, and when these very words I write may not be read for years to come, if they ever are at all, I can confess freely what I was ashamed to tell my father then. Almost simultaneously with Sir Arthur Redleigh's pursuit of me, I had drifted, or rather fallen headlong, into a hopeless attachment for one who had never given me the slightest reason to think of him except as a distant friend, and whom it was little less than madness for me to think of marrying. [Here there was an erasure in the manuscript.] It would be unbecoming and it is needless, to say more.

"After I had thus deceived my father, I had only myself to blame for what followed. He persisted more vehemently than ever in pressing Sir Arthur upon me; and when my brother Reginald came home for his vacation, he joined his efforts to my father's. It may seem strange to you, but the very hopelessness I felt as to the possibility of marrying the one man whom I could have loved, weakened my power of resistance, and made me fall an easier prey than if I had been free from any attachment at all.

"But even as it was I do not think I should have yielded to any ordinary persuasion. What finally drove me to take the fatal step was a terrible scene, which I look back at with painful feelings even now, in which my father revealed to me in my brother's presence that he, Reginald, had been guilty of obtaining money by a means worse than mere getting into debt, and that there was some danger, unless a very large sum were forthcoming in a short time, of his being exposed to a criminal prosecution.

"I hesitate in writing this. Ought I to set these family secrets before you? Yet while I am telling one I may as well tell all, and I do feel a wish—do not think it vanity on my part—to stand as well as I can in your opinion. I would at least that you should know everything that has influenced my conduct, and what my excuses have been.

"In the face of this dreadful peril and disgrace I could not resist any longer. I had always been fond and proud of my brother, and apart from that I could not bear the idea of our father being exposed to such a blow, which I knew would break his heart. In fact, he was very nearly heart-broken already. So I took the last plunge, and promised to accept Sir Arthur Redleigh.

"I made one stipulation, however. Some rather unpleasant stories had reached me of his escapades when under the influence of liquor. I therefore made it a condition of our engagement that he should take the pledge.

"He consented to this without much demur; and for aught I know he adhered to it during the time that our engagement lasted. But that was only a few weeks. Sir Arthur himself was eager for the day to be fixed, and my wretched brother was not less anxious, as his safety depended on Sir Arthur's generosity. The preparations were hurried on accordingly.

"You may remember that our engagement had just been made public the day of the garden party in your grounds. I can never forget your kindness to me on that occasion, and the delicate manner in which, without actually showing your opinion of the match, you sought to encourage me to confide in you on the subject. At one moment I was on the point of giving way and telling you all, but [another erasure] we were interrupted, and the impulse did not return.

"I have often wondered why you should have shown so much interest in one of whom you knew so little, and I have been disposed to put it down to the fact that you had heard the gossip about Lord East and myself. I can only assure you, if that is so, that your son never paid me any real attentions in the sense in which that word is generally understood. There never was the slightest foundation for the report of there being anything between us.

"But whatever the cause, I have never forgotten your words, and still more your manner that day, and the remembrance of them has encouraged me to address these confidences to you. You see now why I could not write to my poor father. I could not do so without seeming to reproach him. He would be crushed to death by such a disclosure as this.

"The wedding-day came at last. I pass over the ceremony in the church, at which I felt myself to be playing a false and wicked part. But I shall never forget the painful shock with which I received the bridegroom's kiss. I could not be mistaken. I perceived that Sir Arthur had been taking brandy that very morning, and already I had a foreboding of what was to follow.

"I said nothing then, and we drove back to the breakfast. His manner was loud and excited, but I hoped that was due to the agitation of the occasion. It was during the breakfast itself that my eyes were first opened.

"Without the smallest apology or concealment he proceeded the moment we sat down to call for champagne. I whispered to him gently, reminding him of his pledge. Whereupon he turned to me, and said in a coarse and almost brutal manner, 'That was all very well while we were engaged, but now I've got you it's my turn to have my way a little,' and he tossed off a tumblerful of the wine.

"From that moment I began to realise the kind of man I had married, and an awful, sickly horror gradually crept over my heart.

"I cannot dwell on what followed. It is sufficient to say that Sir Arthur rose from the breakfast more than half intoxicated, and that long before we reached Glasgow that evening his intoxication was complete. The horror I went through during that train ride with a drunken brute who called himself my husband makes me turn cold whenever I think of it. The only wonder is that I did not go mad in that terrible time.

"You will anticipate—perhaps you have already anticipated—what is coming next. The utter, the unconquerable loathing with which that wretch inspired me drove me to an alternative only less terrible to me than the prospect of wedded life with a monster. I passed in review all the misery of leading such a life as this which I am leading now, and I decided that it was preferable to the other.

"I made up my mind to feign madness."

At this point the detective stopped, confounded by a revelation for which he had, nevertheless, been prepared for some time. All the circumstances flashed again before him, her quiet and resigned appearance, her fondness for the little child, and its not less significant preference for her, Graham's testimony to her physical soundness, so unusual in a really insane person, her instinctive avoidance of the other inmates of the asylum, her outbreaks confined to the occasions when her husband visited her, possibly with the hope of carrying her back with him, her refusal to leave the asylum, testified to by Raebell, all these incidents pointing one way rose before his mind to confirm the statement which the unhappy Laura had penned. He struck his brow with his hand, and exclaimed aloud:

"By Jove! I believe she was no more mad than I am."

Then his eye suddenly fell on Mrs. Ferrier. She had been watching him intently, and now at these words her countenance turned ashy pale, and her eyes shot out a glance of despair.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LAURA'S FATE.

Leaving Mrs. Ferrier to her own reflections, which did not appear to be of a very comfortable nature, the detective hurried on with his reading. Time was passing, and it was important for him to finish the manuscript before any interruption took place.

"I selected [the manuscript went on] the moment when the train reached Carlisle to begin playing my horrid part. I began by suddenly turning to Sir Arthur [the words "my husband" were scored through here], and informing him that I was the Virgin Mary.

"He seemed bewildered, and before he could say anything I rushed into an inner compartment of the saloon, and closed and barred the door.

"When we reached Glasgow he got me out with the assistance of some of the railway officials, and took me to an hotel. I waited till we got into a room upstairs and then threw myself into a frenzy, and frightened him into sending for medical aid.

"The doctor who arrived on the scene did not take much to convince him that I was insane. I could hear him explaining to Sir Arthur (who was pretty well sobered by this time) that my condition was a not uncommon result of intense excitement acting on a highly nervous temperament. And he wound up by recommending that my father should be telegraphed for, and that if his presence failed to restore me, I should be put into an 'institution,' as he called it, for a time.

"I had not foreseen the prospect of my father coming down, and it took me very much aback. However, I had made up my mind, and I had not the least intention of giving way. I had the satisfaction of hearing the doctor tell Sir Arthur that his presence was the cause of violent irritation, and that he must not venture to present himself before me for some time to come. I persevered that night in more or less violent outbreaks, but towards morning I allowed myself to show a calmer demeanour.

"About mid-day my unhappy father arrived. The sight of him was a great shock to me. No doubt he blamed himself for the catastrophe, and it had perceptibly aged him in the few hours since he had received the telegram. I found it hard not to undeceive him, but knowing his character and views, I felt sure that he would betray me to my husband, and seek to effect a reconciliation. That was the one thing I had resolved never to permit.

"I refrained from any outbreak of frenzy in my father's presence, but I persisted in talking of myself as the Virgin, and I saw that I had convinced him of my madness. That same day they brought me to Auchtertown, and lodged me with Dr. Raebell.

"It struck me at the time as a slightly unpleasant circumstance that they should have entered me under a false name. For on the asylum books I was not Lady Redleigh, nor, which I should have preferred, Miss Brown, but 'Mrs. Robins.' Only Dr. Raebell himself is acquainted with my real identity.

"However, my father was present, and privy to all the arrangements, so I felt no uneasiness. They left me in the evening, and I have never seen my father since. I only hear that he is still alive and in his ordinary health.

"The rest of my story may be told in a very few words. My life here has been one of utter desolation. If I have done wrong, and many people will say I have done very wrong, I have been severely punished, and am being punished still. I am without a friend. I dare not hold intercourse with the poor lunatics themselves, for fear of losing my own reason, a fear which has haunted me ever since I came here, and been the bitterest pang I have had to bear, save one.

"The assistant, Dr. Graham, is a good and amiable man, and one whom I should be disposed to trust. But it is the curse of my miserable false position that I dare not hold any rational intercourse with either him or any other sane person, for fear my own sanity should be discovered. As it is, I have sometimes fancied that both Dr. Graham and Raebell suspect more than they pretend.

"The worst troubles I have had here have been the periodical visits of Sir Arthur. He does not seem to have given up the hope of my recovery, and I greatly dread that the proprietor of the place may suggest to him that I am less mad than I seem. I have to throw myself into the most violent frenzies I can command whenever he comes, and that results in my having to endure the ignominy of the padded room.

"But what alarmed me most has been the offer which the proprietor has lately made to me, to send me away to live in freedom in some sequestered part of the country. I cannot believe they would make me this offer if my acting continued to impose on them, and I dread lest it contains a trap. My fear is that were I once outside these walls Sir Arthur would make me his prisoner, and boldly tell me he had ceased to believe in my insanity.

"My only hope now is to be allowed to remain in this asylum, with all its miseries, till death shall sever the bond I have formed, and either send me back into the world a free woman or take me away, though I deserve it not, to a happier world than this can ever be to me.

"That is all I have to say. The dread that has come over me ever and again of late has moved me to commit my story to paper, so that if occasion should arise I may be able to transmit it by means of my friend the gardener. I do not know that you would be able to help me, even if you were disposed to; but it would be a certain consolation to think that there was one friend (if I may still use that word) who understood, and perhaps pitied, the fate of, dear Lord Fatheringham, yours very truly and sincerely,

"LAURA BROWN

"(otherwise Redleigh)."

Here there was a space left in the manuscript. When it was resumed it was in pencil, and the writing was much less clear and easy to decipher.

"POSTSCRIPT.—I did not think that I should so soon be adding to this paper. I am in a state of great distress and alarm. Dr. Graham left a couple of days ago, and they have removed me to his room. It is very horrible to me to think that I am now in a room opposite the cell of the Bedlamite. They tell me that I am ill, and Dr. Raebell is prescribing for me. So far I have felt no ill effects from the medicine. What will come next?"

Then followed a fresh entry, evidently at a later date.

"I am keeping this manuscript behind the chest of drawers. I hope that if anything happens to me the next assistant will find it, and, if he is an honest man like Dr. Graham, send it on to you."

"He would have been more likely to hand it over to Raebell," muttered the detective. Then he read on feverishly. The scrawl was now very faint indeed.

"Dr. Raebell has just been in. He came straight from the Bedlamite's room. I can hear her chain clanking in the night sometimes. But perhaps it is only my fancy. Am I really losing my reason? There is a vague atmosphere of dread all around me. The doctor has just given me some more medicine, but he didn't wait to see me drink it, and I have poured it away. I have now been locked in this room five days, and seen no one but him and Mrs. Ferrier. I always dreaded her."

Another break occurred here.

"This is the sixth day of my imprisonment. I took courage to-day to speak to Dr. Raebell, and to tell him that I did not feel in any way ill. He smiled at me, and said he knew what he was doing, and that he was acting with my husband's authority. He alarmed me greatly by saying this. He then went away without giving me any fresh medicine. This slightly re-assured me, but I feel that something evil is in contemplation.

"Alas! I can hardly believe my eyes! I have just seen a coffin carried past the window! It must be for me. I can write no more. May Heaven——"

Here the manuscript came to an abrupt conclusion. The writer had evidently heard something which led her to fear interruption, and had hastily closed the packet, and deposited it in its hiding-place, little thinking, as she did so, that her dreaded enemy would be the one to discover this last trace of her crime.

Finishing his perusal with his feelings wrought to the highest pitch, Wright thrust the manuscript into his pocket, and literally sprang upon the infernal crone who stood shivering in front of him. He gripped her in an iron grasp, and shook her from head to foot, in spite of her bonds, as he demanded:

"You hag! What have you done with her?"

These words were enough to convince Mrs. Ferrier that she had no lunatic to deal with, even if the fact had not already dawned upon her. With the pillow tied before her mouth, she said nothing, but she cast a glance in the direction of the door, which the detective had not closed behind him after entering.

At that moment, as if in response to the question and the look, a weird and ghastly sound came through the doorway, congealing the listener's very blood in his veins.

It was the sound that Laura had described—the clank of the Bedlamite's chain.

As the noise fell upon his ear, Wright reeled as if he had received a stunning blow. Then quick as lightning he snatched up his dark lantern, turned the light full on, and bounded out into the corridor and towards the door of the cell like one possessed.

The door was not locked. That precaution was rendered unnecessary by a more revolting one. The inmate of that room never got within reach of the door.

He tore it open with frantic energy and rushed in. The full light of his lantern fell upon the farther side of the cell and revealed all. The appalling suspicion which he had just conceived was but too well founded. There, on the straw which alone protected her from the cold stone floor, there, in that dark and noisome dungeon to which a ray of daylight never penetrated, there, covered with rags, and chained and padlocked to the wall like a wild beast, lay the once proud and beautiful wife of Sir Arthur Redleigh.

The detective ground his teeth together in the fiercest curse that he had ever framed, and then, setting down his lantern on the bare floor—for there was no furniture—he rushed to her side.

Alas! She repelled him with a vacant stare. Heaven had shown her greater mercy than man. She had ceased to suffer. She was mad.

With the tears starting to his eyes her deliverer grasped the padlock in his hand, and tried to wrench it asunder by main force. It resisted his efforts, but he bethought him of his bunch of keys, and fortunately one of them fitted the wards. Another instant and the hideous manacles had fallen off, and he had caught the poor woman in his arms and borne her from the hateful spot.

Just as he reached the door, his ears were greeted by a terrific yell. While he had been reading Laura's epistle, Mrs. Ferrier had secretly managed to wriggle herself partly free from the hastily-constructed gag, and as soon as he dashed out of the room she exerted herself successfully in wrenching her head quite away from the pillow. No sooner had she accomplished this than she set up a piercing yell for aid.

There was no time for the detective to hesitate. Leaving Laura for a moment in the passage, he rushed back into the bedroom and dealt the hag a blow with his fist that effectually silenced her for some hours to come.

He then drew his revolver, cocked it, and went back to his helpless charge.

"Come, Lady Redleigh," he said, encouragingly, "we are going away from here at once."

The unhappy creature turned a wondering glance upon him, and drew back a step or two into her cell.

"No, no," she said, "I mustn't go. I'm never to leave this room again for the rest of my life. Don't you know who I am? I'm not Lady Redleigh now. *I'm Mrs. Merchant, the Bedlamite.*"

She did not say it with any show of irritation, but in a meek, helpless sort of way. Smothering his fury at the spectacle of her condition as best he could, the detective caught her firmly round the waist with his left arm, and half pushed, half carried her along the passage. In his right hand he held the revolver, and the lantern he had hung on to a button of his coat.

Suddenly, just as they got to the end of the passage, a bright light shone out in front of them, and the way was barred by Dr. Raebell, also armed with a revolver, and by two burly keepers, carrying bludgeons of formidable appearance.

"Stop them!" cried the doctor to his assistants, at the same time pointing his weapon at Wright. "It's the Bedlamite escaping, and a madman with her."

Laura's face was hidden from view by her long hair, which had fallen over it in disorder as her protector hurried her along. He now set her down against the wall, and, levelling his own weapon at the proprietor of the asylum, exclaimed:

"Dr. Raebell, let me pass at your peril!"

"Don't let him! He is mad!" cried the other. "Take that pistol from him."

The two keepers moved forward.

"Another step, and I fire!" cried the detective.

They drew back.

"Let us pass, or your lives shall pay for it," he said, advancing in his turn.

"Never! Come any farther, and I shall fire," answered Raebell, looking pale but determined.

For a brief space they stood there facing each other. "Must I kill them?" was the thought passing through the detective's mind. "Who is he?" was the question in Dr. Raebell's.

The latter was the first to break the grim silence.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "You are not one of my patients."

"I *am* one of your patients," was the retort. "I am the one whom you received under the false name of Mrs. Armytage, just as you received Lady Redleigh under the false name of Mrs. Robins, and buried Mrs. Merchant under the same false name."

Crushed by this answer, the doctor staggered back a pace or two.

Taking advantage of this, Wright turned to the two assistants, and continued, speaking in sharp, menacing accents like the rattle of musketry:

"Your master is found out. Look at him, and obey him if you dare. He knows I am no madman. I came here to inquire into the suspected murder of Lady Redleigh, known to you as Mrs. Robins. I am a detective from Scotland Yard, sent down here by the Earl of Fatheringham, and I have friends outside who will bring the police here and ransack the place to its foundations if I am detained. In the Queen's name, I command you to let me pass!"

The two men, bewildered and terrified, drew back before him. He took Laura by the hand, and she made a step forward with him. Then Dr. Raebell, overwhelmed as he was, made one last attempt.

"Stop the woman!" he said. "No one has a right to take her away."

The assistants hesitated for an instant, and looked as if they were prepared to obey. All at once they threw down their bludgeons and shrank back trembling, with the exclamation upon their lips:

"Mrs. Robins's ghost!"

Laura had brushed aside her hair, and gazed full at them, and they were soul-stricken at the sight of one whose burial they thought they had taken part in only a day or two before.

Inly wondering at this opportune action on her part, Wright seized the advantage to hurry past the astounded group, and on to the front-door of the premises. Here he rapidly undid the fastenings, and in another moment they were outside in the grounds.

But as they made their way towards the outer gate, the detective heard the sound of pursuit behind him. Apparently Dr. Raebell had recovered from his stupefaction, and had succeeded in persuading the keepers to bear him out in a desperate resistance. There was nothing for it but to run.

"Come, Lady Redleigh," he said, impressively, "we must go quicker. We must run."

To his surprise she obeyed him at once, and they soon arrived at the lodge, before their pursuers had well got clear of the house.

Wright knocked loudly at the lodge door, and the gardener was not long in appearing.

"What is it?" he said. "Who are you?"

Wright briefly explained.

"I am a detective, sent down here to investigate into the recent death of Mrs. Robins. I have found her still alive, and am taking her away. Open at once."

The man failed to understand him.

"You must be deceiving me, sir. I saw Mrs. Robins buried with my own eyes. And, besides, I can't open the gate without my master's orders."

"Your master is a scoundrel who has broken the law, and is now prepared to dare anything to escape the consequences. If you doubt my word, look at this lady's features."

He looked, and was startled, but still he did not open the gate. The pursuers were now within hail.

"I can't sir, really. I have my orders, and I daren't disobey them."

At this moment his master's voice was heard.

"That's right, Campbell! They are escaped lunatics. Don't let them out."

The detective turned slowly round. He was at bay at last.

"Very well," he said to the gardener, who looked frightened, but obstinate. "If there is bloodshed the blame must rest with you. These fiends shan't re-take their victim and torture the last gleam of intellect out of her while there's an ounce of breath left in Jonas Wright's body. If I'm killed let Lord Fatheringham know about it, and he will reward you well."

And without further warning he put up his revolver and fired a shot at the approaching group. It was too dark for him to aim properly, and the shot took no effect.

Then Laura did another thing that astonished the detective. She suddenly went up to the gardener, laid her hands on his shoulders, and said:

"How is little Ellen?"

The effect was magical. The man gave a great choking cough, and gasped out:

"Oh, I can't stand this!" And he rushed inside for his keys.

By this time the enemy were well in sight, and their leader now fired his revolver in turn. The bullet struck Wright in the left leg, but he did not fall, and instantly replied with three shots in rapid succession from his own weapon, with deadly effect.

Dr. Raebell fell like a log, and one of the keepers, hit in the shoulder, dropped his bludgeon and stopped short. The third man, who was unhurt, still came on, and was upon Wright before he had time to fire again. Grappling with the detective, who was weakened by the wound in his leg, he had already forced him on to the ground, when the gardener emerged with the key of the gate in his hand.

"Save him, oh, save him!"

It was Laura who uttered that cry, and her friend did not wait for its repetition. Raising the great key high above his shoulder, he brought it down with a crash upon the keeper's head, just as he was overcoming Wright's powers of resistance.

The man was nearly killed by the blow, and any further resistance by any of the three was out of the question. Wright at once rose to his feet, regardless of the wound in his leg, and began to thank the gardener.

"This shall be the best day's work you ever did," he said.

"Oh, aye," answered the man, speaking with a broad Scotch accent, "I dinna care so much about that, though I suppose my job here's about over. But I wasn't going to let them ill-treat this poor lady after all her kindness to my little girl, mad or not mad."

"She is no more mad than you or I," replied the detective, firmly. And this time Laura did not contradict him.

In another minute the great gate stood ajar, and Lady Redleigh and her deliverer were out on the road to Stirling, while their friend went to look after the wounded.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ALL IS NOT YET OVER.

THE Earl of Fatheringham was seated in his library. Before him was a letter addressed to Mr. Smith, at the Post Office, Stalne. Without opening it, the Earl was re-directing it to Mr. Armytage, at 45, St. Bartholomew Crescent, Glasgow.

A servant came in, looking slightly flurried and uncertain in mind.

"A gentleman, my lord, wishes to see you, Mr. Armytage."

"Bring him instantly," said the Earl, rising to his feet as he spoke.

He knew whom to expect, and he was not disappointed. The man whom he first met as the Rev. A. Copingstone, and afterwards as Smith, the gamekeeper, walked in, limping slightly, and dressed now in an ordinary tweed costume.

The Earl gazed at him steadfastly till the servant had gone out and closed the door behind him.

"Well, Mr. Wright?"

"Well, my lord, I have very much to tell you. I hardly know where to begin. But perhaps it will be best that I should at once hand you this manuscript. It was found in the bedroom occupied by Lady Redleigh."

Lord Fatheringham took it and read the superscription. He gave a start.

"But why is it addressed to me?"

"Read the contents, my lord, and you will soon see."

"But someone has opened it already?"

"I did that. I don't think you will blame me when you consider all the circumstances, about which I will tell you as soon as you have read that."

Lord Fatheringham frowned.

"Well, sit down," he said. "How did you get that limp?"

"A little token of remembrance from Dr. Raebell. I made it worse by walking seven miles directly after; but it is getting all right again now."

He took a seat, and the Earl was soon absorbed in Laura's tragic confession. He read it on steadily to the end without a pause. But Wright, who was watching him, saw the blood come and go in his face every now and then at passages in the narrative. At last he reached the end, and, slowly folding up the sheets, solemnly placed them in his breast.

"If there is justice under the sun," he said, with a sort of slow, mournful, deliberate wrath, "her death shall be avenged."

"Perhaps it is not so bad as you think," suggested Wright, quietly.

"What do you mean? What else have you discovered. Speak, man!"

"If your lordship sees, that paper ends abruptly. As far as it is concerned, you have no proof that Lady Redleigh's fears turned out to be well-founded."

"Spare me this circumlocution. Come to the point at once. I insist upon it."

"Then I will tell you. Lady Redleigh is still alive."

Lord Fatheringham gave a deep gasp, and then clenched his hands tightly in the effort to smother his emotion. Once or twice he opened his lips, but his feelings were too strong for him to speak.

The detective watched the struggle going on in that proud, reserved, solitary nature with silent respect. He waited till the Earl seemed to have recovered himself, and then launched out into a minute and graphic report of his proceedings from the time he had started for Scotland.

Before he had gone far, however, he was interrupted by a question:

"But where is she all this time? Where have you left her? Surely not in that place?"

"No, no. She came south with us. She is in this neighbourhood."

"Where? At her father's?"

"No, we have not communicated with him yet. I left her with Mr. Haworthy."

The Earl seemed satisfied for the moment, and Wright resumed his narrative. His listener's face assumed varying expressions as the detective described the asylum, its inmates, its proprietor, and Mrs. Ferrier; but with the first allusion to the horrible story of the Bedlamite, the Earl lifted his hand with a forbidding gesture.

"Spare me these horrible things," he said. "Confine yourself to your finding of Lady Redleigh."

"I am doing so, my lord," was the unmoved reply, and Wright steadily proceeded.

As he did so he saw Lord Fatheringham's face turning greyer as he listened. The horror of it seemed to be more than he could endure. The detective pulled up in the middle, and said:

"Courage, my lord! There is everything to hope for yet."

He then went on, and the Earl listened in grim silence to the account of the finding of Laura and her melancholy condition. But when the detective came to the scene in the corridor, where he had won his way through the group of opponents, Lord Fatheringham cast a grateful look on him, and exclaimed:

"That was well done of you!"

Wright bowed and continued his story, relating the incident at the lodge, and finally his desperate encounter with his three pursuers.

At this point the Earl threw off all reserve. Rising from his seat, he crossed over to the detective and shook him warmly by the hand.

"You are a brave fellow, and I am grateful for the hour that brought us together," he said.

The other blushed with pleasure, touched alike by the Earl's praise and by his delicacy in not hinting at reward at such a moment.

"Well, my lord," he wound up, "we escaped and walked together the seven miles into Stirling. But now comes the most marvellous part of it. When I found Lady Redleigh there is no doubt that her mind had been unhinged by the horror of being in that frightful place for three whole days, and I was afraid it might take a long time before she ever came round again. But it seems like a providence; I do believe that the excitement of those adventures in escaping gave a sort of beneficial shock to her mind, roused the instinct of self-preservation, so to speak, and forced her brain into action. When we got out on that road I found her quite a different being. Mind"—for he saw the flash of joy in his listener's eye—"mind, I don't say that she is recovered yet, or will be for some time. But she has been getting better steadily from that moment."

Lord Fatheringham uttered an ejaculation of thankfulness.

"And there's another thing." Here Wright paused a moment, and looked doubtfully at his employer. "I feel a delicacy in saying it, but with a gentleman like your lordship it is quite safe. And besides it is important that you should know."

"Tell me, tell me everything; I have a right to hear all," said the Earl, anxiously.

"Well, you have seen by that letter, or story, that Lady Redleigh feels a peculiar friendship—a peculiar confidence in your lordship. Now it struck me—not at the time, but afterwards, when I came to think over it—as a remarkable coincidence that the first effort she made, the first sign of intelligence she showed after my discovering her, was immediately after I had mentioned in her hearing that I was acting on your behalf."

"Ah! Yes?"

"And afterwards again, at the lodge, it was just when I had mentioned your name a second time that she came to the rescue there, and saved us by her appeal to the gardener."

"Yes, yes."

"So on our walk into Stirling I talked to her and introduced your name again, and though it was too dark for me to see her face, she spoke to me in quite a different manner when I talked about you. As soon as I got her into an hotel at Stirling I procured a nurse, who looked to me a thoroughly good sort, and told her as much of the circumstances as I thought necessary. I instructed her not to leave Lady Redleigh for a moment, to talk to her as much as possible on simple, cheerful topics, and whenever she showed signs of lapsing to introduce references to you. And the result, so far, has been most favourable."

"I see you think of everything. But there is one thing you do not seem to have thought of."

"What is that, my lord?" asked the detective, slightly piqued.

"I will tell you presently. Finish your story first. What did you do after getting the nurse at Stirling?"

"Got a doctor to see to my wound, who ordered me to put my leg in splints, and lie up in bed for the next six days. He might as well have told me six years. I went to bed for a few hours, and then in the morning sent off a telegram to Mr. Haworthy to expect us, and took the train for Glasgow. Oh, and before starting I sent a man with a cart to the asylum for my luggage and anything they had of Lady Redleigh's."

"You don't say so! And they let you have it? What state were they in?"

"Well, I sent a letter with the man for Rasbell or for Mrs. Ferrier, if he should happen to be *hors de combat*, pitching into them pretty strong, but saying that as Lady Redleigh was now in a fair way to recovery, and as they had no doubt been mere tools in the hands of her husband, I should not prosecute them. And I added a postscript, hoping that they felt none the worse in the morning for their sleep having been disturbed in the night."

"And what answer did you get?"

"Oh, much what I expected. A furious epistle from Rasbell himself, declaring that I had shot him in the head, and that he should have me arrested on a charge of burglary and attempt to murder, and that if Mrs. Ferrier expired from the effects of my ferocious attack on her, he had every confidence of seeing me hanged. He added that Lady Redleigh was a dangerous lunatic, who had given him endless care and trouble, and that he had done nothing that her condition did not imperatively require." The speaker paused a moment, and then added:

"But he took care to send back the things. The gardener and his little girl came in with them, and he told me that I had only carried off a piece of the doctor's ear, and that there was nothing serious the matter with the woman."

"And what have you done with them?"

"The man and child? Oh, I brought them here. I thought you would wish it. They are in the place somewhere."

Lord Fatheringham smiled kindly upon the speaker, and nodded his head in approval.

"I will see that they never regret the change," he said.

"But what is the thing your lordship says I did not think of?" asked Wright, still slightly huffed.

Lord Fatheringham smiled again.

"Why, don't you see, if it is the case that Lady Redleigh's recovery is hastened by the mere mention of my name, would it not be likely to help her still more to see and talk to me myself?"

"Quite so."

"That didn't occur to you, though?"

"Yes, it did."

"Then why didn't you bring her here, too?"

"I did bring her here."

The detective enjoyed the Earl's confusion for a moment, and then calmly explained:

"She is in the next room with Mr. Haworthy. He has been preparing her to receive you. Shall we go in?"

And he led the way to the door.

There were, as a matter of fact, three persons in the other room, Lady Redleigh, Haworthy, and the nurse, a worthy Scotchwoman called McAlister. It was the latter who had done most towards preparing Laura for Lord Fatheringham's arrival on the scene. Haworthy, who had borne himself with zeal and patience during the expedition to Scotland, no sooner found himself back in his own neighbourhood than the thought of his own private trouble began to harass his mind.

What had happened to Eva during his absence? This was the question he kept asking himself. He had heard nothing from her since the day, now nearly a fortnight ago, on which she had informed him, with her eyes streaming with tears, that their engagement was at an end.

He had pressed her for an explanation. But she would, or could, give him none, beyond the fact that her father had absolutely and stringently commanded her, on her final allegiance, to renounce the match.

That was all he had been able to obtain from her; and an interview with her father had led to no more satisfactory result. Mr. Grosse professed himself to be deeply pained at having to break off the match, he had none but favourable sentiments towards Mr. Haworthy personally, but there were various reasons, family reasons and others, which made it imperative for him to form other plans for his daughter. He had retired, bitterly mortified as well as grieved, to make those preparations for foreign travel which Wright had interrupted.

To these preparations his mind now reverted, in spite of the hope that had been held out to him, but for which he could see no foundation. He consequently lapsed by degrees into a gloomier and gloomier state of mind, which left him in no condition to be of much service in dealing with one in Laura's peculiar condition.

However, Mrs. McAlister did her best to supply his place. She had been given an insight into the contents of Laura's history of herself, and she had striven to recall to the mind of her charge the previous occasion on which she had visited the Towers.

But it had taken up some time for the interview between the two in the library, and Laura was beginning to show signs of impatience.

"Why doesn't he come?" she said, referring to Lord Fatheringham. "I think he must be dead, because last time I came here he was with me nearly all the while."

"He is coming. He will be here directly," said the nurse."

"Will he? I'm so glad. It's quite a long time since I've seen him. What have I been doing since?"

The nurse saw it was time to strike in and divert her thoughts.

"Lord Fatheringham is very anxious to see you again, I know," she said. "I expect he will want you to stay here for awhile."

"Will he? I should like that so much." She spoke quite in her old natural manner, looking up brightly.

"Then I hope you will consider it settled."

It was the Earl himself who spoke. He had entered in time to hear the last few words, and he now advanced towards her with extended hand.

For a moment he was alarmed at the result of his intervention.

Laura rose slowly from her seat, her eyes dilating, and her whole frame quivering. In this position she stood for a moment, regarding the Earl intently. Then she swiftly put her hands before her eyes, and took them away again. The next instant she was on her knees at his feet, sobbing aloud, and faltering out:

"Oh, I am not mad! It was all a bad dream! I have got my reason, and you have saved me!"

Lord Fatheringham stooped and lifted her up like a little child, and laid her gently on a sofa. Then he bent respectfully and kissed her hand.

"Lady Redleigh," he said, "be at ease. You are indeed saved, though you have to thank that brave and skilful man there more than me. I shall feel honoured if you will accept my hospitality till some equally safe home can be found for you elsewhere. And I will, if you desire it, ask your father to stay at the Towers as long as you are here."

"Do as you think best," she murmured, faintly. "I do not feel strong enough yet to think or act for myself. But Sir Arthur Redleigh? He will hear where I am. Has he not the right to claim me?"

"No," replied the Earl, firmly. "I refuse to believe that the law of England is quite so bad as that. He has forfeited whatever right he once possessed, and our friend here has enough proofs in his possession to terrify him from ever molesting you again."

"I can do better than that, I think," said the detective, stepping forward.

"How so?"

"The behaviour of Sir Arthur in this last conspiracy, coupled with this false announcement of her death, gives Lady Redleigh a claim to legal protection from him. We can obtain a decree for judicial separation."

The faces of the others brightened.

"He will never dare to resist it," observed Lord Fatheringham. "Well, we will lose no time. As soon as you feel equal to the journey you shall go up to my solicitors, and give them the materials to commence proceedings."

"I would go at once," responded Wright, "but I have some more matters to clear up here before I start. In the first place I have a promise to redeem to this gentleman."

Haworthy, who had been a silent spectator of the foregoing scene, looked up at this.

"What can you do for me?" he grumbled.

"Ah, I believe there is no limits whatever to Mr. Wright's powers," said the Earl pleasantly. "But I have just recollected—there is a letter for you on my desk in the next room, which my people fetched to-day from Stalne."

Mr. Wright darted out to fetch it, and returned with it open in his hand.

"Shall I read it out?" he said.

"By all means," answered the Earl. "But stay, perhaps as Lady Redleigh is tired, we had better hear it in the library."

As the three men went out, in pursuance of this suggestion, Lord Fatheringham turned to the nurse and said gravely:

"Do whatever you can to make Lady Redleigh comfortable. I will give orders that she is to be treated in the house exactly as if she were my daughter. Mr. Brown shall be sent for at once."

This was the letter which had come for the wondering Smith:—

"MY DEAREST JEM,—I have been hoping to hear from you, but I suppose you have been too busy looking for a public-house to write. But do drop me a line soon, there's a dear, because I find it very lonesome here now you are gone. No one ever comes near the place, and I have not heard any talk of a new keeper in your place. I expect they are afraid, and I know that Trevern has been talking down at the Lamb about Sir Arthur, and making the men there afraid to try for the place. But it won't matter to me, will it, if I am going to leave soon, and with your money and mine we ought to get a nice little place and do well. I hope we shall never quarrel, but always be like we are now, only you will write to me at once, won't you, or else I shall worry. I have just had my quarter's money from Mr. G. He is looking worried and ill, I fancy. But no more at present, with fond love from your own devoted CATHERINE.

P.S.—I think you went away before I heard this. Sir Arthur is going to marry again, and what do you think? Miss G!

At this startling conclusion Lord Fatheringham drew back a step. Haworthy uttered a deep oath, and seemed too thunderstruck to say more. But the detective, slipping the letter into his pocket, looked round with an air of placid triumph, and observed:

"I have been expecting this from the first."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

EARLY the next day Mr. Wright was afoot, and making a memorable round of visits. He procured the same dogcart that he had had twice before from the stables of the "Polar Bear," and started first for the abode of Mrs. Burlston.

Catherine hardly recognised him till he addressed her.

"Why, Jem, is that you?" she said. "You have come out grand. Have you got everything settled?—why, what's the matter?"

For Jem, instead of welcoming her to his arms, stood aloof, regarding her with severe looks.

"Catherine Burlston, since I saw you last, I have had a talk with Dr. Druscott."

She showed her fright at once.

"And before I have anything more to say to you, you must explain two things to me. First, what was the cause of Lord East's death?"

She looked distracted between fear, anger, and disappointment. At first he thought she was going to say nothing. But she seemed to make up her mind to brazen it out, and answered:

"He killed himself. He had some brandy hidden in the room against the doctor's orders, and when I turned my back for a minute, he got at it and drank it. It wasn't any fault of mine."

"And one other thing:—Why has Mr. Grosse paid you a pension ever since?"

That shot went home. The wretched creature gave a scream, and went off into a fit of hysterics.

Leaving her to recover how and when she liked, Wright went out to his trap and proceeded to Broadmead, where he found the master of the house at home.

He sent in his name simply as Mr. Wright, on confidential business. Men with secrets in their lives dare not disregard such messages as that.

With Mr. Grosse before him, he came to the point immediately.

"I am a friend of Mr. Haworthy's," he said, "acting in his interests, though without authority from him. I have come to press you to reconsider your decision as to his match with your daughter." Mr. Grosse was about to rise and haughtily close the interview, when his visitor added, in tones of quiet menace, "And I have reasons which you will refuse to hear at your peril."

Mr. Grosse changed colour slightly, and sat down again.

"You come too late, sir," he said, trying to keep up a show of cold disdain. "You may tell the gentleman who sent you here that my daughter is going to marry Sir Arthur Redleigh."

"No, she is not." The contradiction was given with

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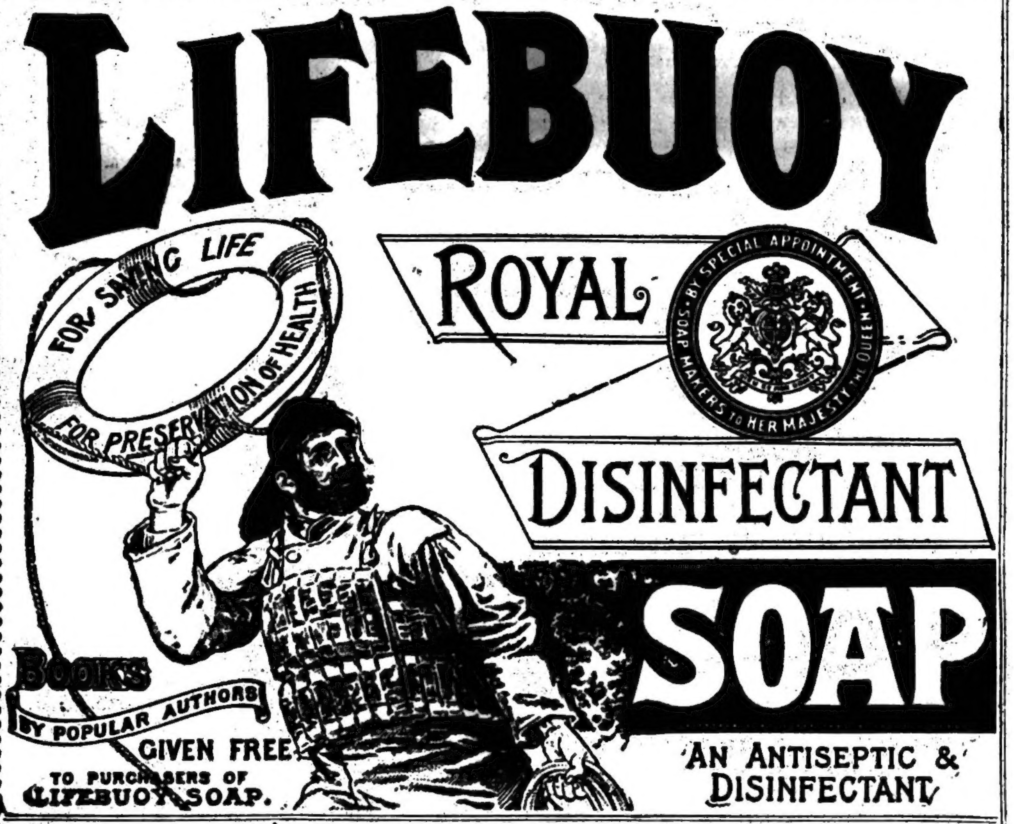
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The examination of the sample of 'Lifebuoy Royal Disinfectant Soap' furnished to me by Messrs. Lever Brothers, Limited, of Port Sunlight, England, gives the following results as to its action as a disinfectant.

Solutions of 1, 2, and 5 per cent. of Lifebuoy Royal Disinfectant Soap in water were made. These solutions were brought to bear on a variety of clean cultivated germs or microbes (Bacillus), in each case a certain exact time being allowed for the operation; and thus the capacity of this soap for destroying the various live and growing germs was proved.

THE RESULTS were as follows:

1.—The obstinate Typhoid Microbes, with the 5 per cent. solution, were dead within two hours.

2.—The operation of this soap on the Cholera Microbes was very remarkable, and showed this soap to be in the highest degree a disinfectant. These were taken from persons who had died of Cholera in Hamburg, and showed a result as follows:—

With the 2 per cent. mixture, Cholera Microbes were dead within 15 minutes. With the 5 per cent. same were dead within 5 minutes.

3.—The Diphtheria Microbes were killed after 2 hours with the 5 per cent. solution.

4.—The 5 per cent. solution was tried on fresh Carbuncle germs, and the result showed that the Microbe life was entirely extinct after 4 hours.

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the cool insolence that springs from concealed power. Mr. Grosse was equally irritated and alarmed.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Sir Arthur Redleigh is already married."

"But his first wife is dead."

"No, she is not."

"Sir!"

"Lady Redleigh is within less than ten miles of this house. She is the guest of the Earl of Fatheringham." The man before him literally reeled in his chair. Wright promptly followed up the blow by a brief narration of Sir Arthur's plot and its failure.

The listener's face was a study while this was going on. Whatever his real character he could not but be rejoiced that his child had escaped the clutches of such a man. Yet he still looked troubled and angry.

"Well, sir," he said, "all this is a very good reason why my daughter should not marry Redleigh. But it is none at all why she should marry your friend."

"True, very true."

"Then if you have nothing more to say——"

"I have something more to say. Unless you write a letter within twenty-four hours to Mr. Haworthy to tell him you consent to this marriage—give whatever pretext you like—I shall come to you in my capacity as a detective-inspector in her Majesty's service, and ask you the question which I now ask you merely in the capacity of a friend of the family: Did you ask Sir Arthur Redleigh to shoot his keeper, or did you shoot him yourself?"

Mr. Grosse, who had heard him out with visible agitation, pulled himself together at the close, and answered, loudly and confidentially:

"Neither, sir. I know not how you have conceived such shameful suspicions, which are insulting to me as a gentleman and as a magistrate for the county, but I defy you to produce the smallest foundation for them, and I warn you that the consequences will be very serious if you do not instantly abandon them."

For a moment the detective seemed to be vanquished. But he had not played his last card.

"I will give you one of my reasons for what you call, very truly, a shameful suspicion, if you will first answer a question of mine."

"If it is one fit for me to answer."

"Then why have you paid a pension to Catherine Burlston ever since the death of Lord East made you heir to the earldom of Fatheringham?"

It was a crushing overthrow. Mr. Grosse turned red and white by turns, and for many moments he could find no words to answer.

Finally he managed to say:

"This accusation is as wicked and baseless as the other. Catherine has been a protégée of my family for years, and nursed my wife many times. I pay her a pension because she lost her position in the Nurses' Institute, and appealed to me for assistance."

"I see. And her story, and Dr. Druscott's, about the brandy, and the hastening of Lord East's end, are mere coincidences, fortunate coincidences for you, but nothing more. Well sir"—the detective arose as he spoke—"I am sorry to have had to refer to these topics, and still more so that they should have to become public property. I would have kept silence on them for Mr. Haworthy's sake, had he married Miss Grosse, but, as it is, the sooner he and others hear of them the better."

And he moved towards the door. But Mr. Grosse was only waiting to surrender.

"Stay, sir," he muttered, "you shall have your letter. My conscience is perfectly clear, but it would kill my wife even to hear of such frightful slanders." And he seated himself at a secretary, and wrote.

The other watched him with a sardonic smile, and then took the letter without a word.

"I have explained," said Mr. Grosse, hurriedly, "that after Redleigh's shocking behaviour, I have been unable to resist my daughter's wishes any more. He can come here as soon as he likes."

"You had better expect him this evening," answered the detective. And he left Broadmead, not to return.

Haughton Court was his next point. Here he asked for Sir Arthur Redleigh, and though they told him the baronet was hardly fit to see anyone, he would brook no denial.

"Say that it is someone from Dr. Raebell," he said.

The message proved effective, and he was speedily shown into the presence of the baronet, who had evidently not fully recovered from the last night's debauch. As yet he had heard nothing of the recent episode at Auchtertown. Dr. Raebell had been afraid to write.

"What is it? what's happened?" demanded Sir Arthur, as soon as the visitor and he were alone.

"Bad news, Sir Arthur. You know Dr. Raebell and you agreed that Mrs. Robins, as she was called, was to be put into the cell as soon as Mrs. Merchant died, and to take her name?"

"Yes, well, what was done?"

"That was what was done. It went all right so far, and everybody believed that Mrs. Robins was dead and buried. Our other hope was fulfilled, too. Lady Redleigh really did lose her reason at last——"

"She was not mad, then?" cried Sir Arthur, excitedly.

"No, never really so. She feigned it to escape from you."

"I suspected it from the first!" exclaimed the baronet, with a fearful oath. "Well, go on."

"As I was saying, she went really mad and believed that she was actually Mrs. Merchant."

"Good gracious!" The baronet looked remorseful. I never thought of that. I never expected that the change would do her any harm, except by the loneliness—but then she always preferred to be alone before."

The detective heard him with a slight relenting from his former enmity. After all, the wrong had not been entirely of the baronet's creation. It had been a terribly false position from the very first, and possibly Sir Arthur had only come out from it a little worse than the ordinary run of men would have done.

"Well, sir, it can't be helped now. What I came to tell you was that Lady Redleigh had escaped."

"Escaped!"

"Yes; or, rather, been carried off. A detective got into the asylum, disguised as a patient, and brought her away by force, after shooting Dr. Raebell and one of the keepers."

"By Jove! This is Lord Fatheringham's work."

"Why do you think that, sir?"

"Why, because he came to me here, three years ago, just after I had put her in the asylum, and warned me that if a hair of her head were injured he would avenge her."

"Well, you have guessed right. It was he."

"And what has become of her now?"

"She is staying at the Towers."

"What, in her madness?"

"She has already almost entirely recovered her reason."

"And does her father know of it?"

"He is staying there with her."

"But she is my wife. I have a right to her custody."

"She has authorised them to bring a suit for judicial separation. And I strongly advise you not to resist it."

"But how did you come to hear all this? Who are you?" A light broke on his mind, and he exclaimed, "Why, it's Smith, the gamekeeper!"

"No, sir, my name is not Smith, and I am not a gamekeeper. My name is Wright, and I am the detective who rescued Lady Redleigh from the worse than death you had exposed her to."

Sir Arthur Redleigh staggered to his feet.

"Then what are you doing here? Explain your presence, sir! And what did you mean by entering my service in disguise?"

"Ah, that was about another little matter," said the detective, also rising. "My interference in Lady Redleigh's case was merely an episode. I came down here on another inquiry, which I think is now very nearly completed."

"What inquiry do you mean?" demanded Sir Arthur, looking less confident.

"I mean one into the circumstances of Burlston's death," retorted the other, with a severe look, under which the baronet quailed.

"But why? What for? Who sent you? Was this Fatheringham's doing, too?" broke from his lips.

"Never mind at whose suggestion I came. I have discovered enough to cast very grave doubt indeed on the correctness of the verdict found by the Haughton shopkeepers. Perhaps you would like to enlighten me of your own accord as to what really occurred that day, but I caution you now that whatever you may say will be taken down, and may be given in evidence against you at your trial." And he produced an official note-book.

"Trial!" shouted Sir Arthur, fairly aghast. "For what?"

"For wilful murder."

"No, no; it's not so bad as that. Listen, and I will tell you all, and you will see that your suspicions have overshot the mark."

"Proceed."

"I was not sober that day, I admit," said the stricken man, "and I oughtn't to have gone out, but Grosse laughed at me and said it would be all right. It was the first time he had shot over my covers for ever so long, and I thought it would seem rude to disoblige him. So I went."

"Yes, and then?"

"Well, the evidence given at the inquest was true as far it went. The man did go on in front; I suppose it must have been only a few paces, as they say so. And then I did what I shall never be able to understand, and what I should never have done unless I'd been pretty well out of my senses. I raised my gun in joke and pointed it at Burlston from behind."

"I see—I see."

"And then it went off. I fancied—mind, it must have been only my fancy, that Grosse knocked my elbow by accident, and that made it go off, but he swore to me most solemnly that that was a delusion, and that he never touched me, and I believe him. But in any case it was the purest accident throughout, though, of course, it was an awful thing for me to go and play such a trick as that."

The detective listened attentively, and whistled softly once or twice to himself. At the end he seemed reluctantly to be convinced, for he remarked:

"I confess this solution of it didn't occur to me. But, stay, how was it the boy who was there didn't say something about this?"

Sir Arthur hung his head.

"I bribed him to hold his tongue," he admitted. "I wish now I had let him speak out. As it was he was within an ace of letting the cat out of the bag, only the coroner stopped him."

The detective dealt himself a blow on the forehead.

"Fool!" he muttered. "I never thought of asking him what he was going to say when the coroner shut him up. I took it for granted it was only bad language. But he's here, I suppose? Let us have him in?"

"By all means," said the baronet, glad at the prospect of getting off so cheaply. And he rang the bell and gave the required order.

When the boy appeared, his master said to him.

"Now, Martin, I want you to tell this gentleman truthfully about what happened the day I shot Burlston. Remember, I don't want you to keep back anything."

"I have only one question to ask you," said Wright to the bewildered lad. "Do you remember what you were saying when the coroner stopped you at the inquest?"

After a certain amount of fumbling and staring, Martin intimated that he did recollect.

"What was it?"

"Well, sir, I were a saying as how S'Arthur a runned up to keeper, and Muster Grosse, a says to un, 'How could you be so clumsy?' and a says back, angered-like, 'Why the dickens did you jog my arm?' And Muster Grosse says, 'Confound you,' a says, 'I never touched you. You bees drunk.'"

"That's enough," said Wright, and when the boy had left the room, he turned to the baronet:

"Well, Sir Arthur, I owe you an apology for my suspicions. I shall always have my own opinion about Mr. Grosse, but I don't see any use in carrying the matter further after this evidence. I shan't trouble you again."

And he came away.

An hour or so later he was closeted with the Earl of Fatheringham, to whom he related the substance of what had passed, together with his own surmises and the reasons for them.

"I shall never forgive myself for overlooking the boy's evidence," he concluded. "I'm not fit to be a detective. I ought to retire."

But the Earl consoled him.

"Never mind, Mr. Wright. In hunting the shadow you have found the substance. But for your efforts, brought to bear by what men call chance, a worse crime than this would have gone undetected and undiscovered." His lordship paused for a moment, and then resumed, with some emotion, "You are a shrewd man, and you must have discovered by now the reason for my enmity against Sir Arthur Redleigh. You have accomplished all, and more than all, I hoped for when I first sent for you, and when you open this envelope in the train, you will find I have not been ungrateful."

And he handed him a cheque for an amount that surpassed Mr. Wright's most extravagant hopes, and which would have almost enabled him to carry out his threat of retiring had he really meant it.

In the course of their consultation, Lord Fatheringham and the detective agreed that it would be best to allow the circumstances which cast so terrible a shadow on Mr. Grosse to sleep in oblivion. There was hardly what the law calls proof against him, and the Earl was reluctant to create such a dreadful scandal about Mr. Haworthy's father-in-law and his own kinsman.

As soon as Wright got to London he made his way to the solicitor's in Theobald Street, and gave him full instructions to commence a suit for judicial separation on behalf of Lady Redleigh. And after one of those extraordinary delays which the lawyer bears with so much more equanimity than the client, the proceedings were actually begun.

But the suit never came to a hearing. The great terminator of quarrels, Death, interposed; and the course of life to which Sir Arthur Redleigh resigned himself more recklessly than ever reached its natural climax in a last fatal orgie.

Immediately the death was known Lady Redleigh and her father removed from Fatheringham Towers to the Rectory. By his will the baronet left every acre of his property to his widow, a tardy act of reparation by which she refused to profit.

It was a month afterwards that Lord Fatheringham paid his first call on the widow. She received him with some embarrassment, and after they had talked on trival affairs for some time, she put on a rather serious air, and said to him:

"Lord Fatheringham, we have agreed that I am to say nothing more about all your goodness to me. But I have been afraid sometimes, from your manner, and again from your delay in calling here, that there was some misunderstanding between us. You have read a certain confession I once wrote for you, and I have been afraid that you may possibly have been misled by a certain passage in that confession, in which I said something about an attachment for someone far beyond me. Now, I have been afraid sometimes that you might possibly have fallen in the belief that it was *you* I meant by that, and have therefore tried to let me see——"

Here her voice, trembling for some time, forsook her altogether. The Earl hastened to her assistance in a sad, yet courageous, voice:

"You have guessed the very reverse of the right cause, Lady Redleigh. I never dreamt for one instant that the person alluded to was myself. I could not be so presumptuous. The only reason I have had for restraint towards you has been the fear lest I might forfeit your friendship by being betrayed into a confession of my own, the confession that I have sometimes wished I had made that day you were at the Towers. For I loved you then, and always shall love you. Farewell."

"Lord Fatheringham!"

Something in the tone made his heart give a great throb. He turned back, and saw that Laura's face was the colour of a poppy.

"Do you want Mr. Wright's help to find out who I really did mean?"

. So ends the story. Except this—that when Mr. Grosse was last heard of he had ceased to be heir-presumptive to the Earldom of Fatheringham.

THE END.

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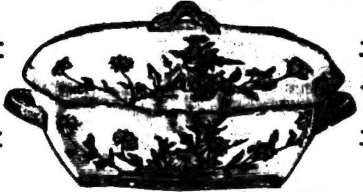

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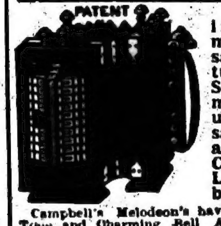

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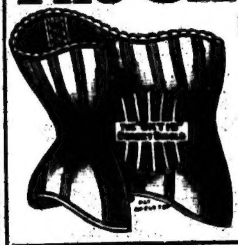

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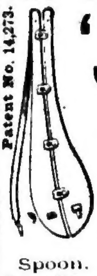
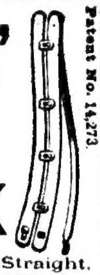

Patent No. 14,273.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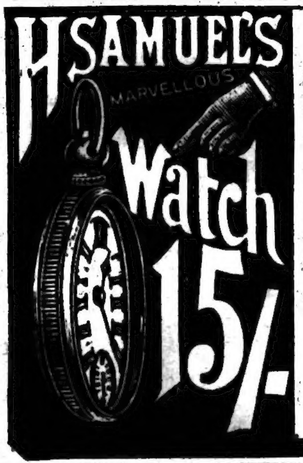

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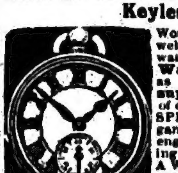

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